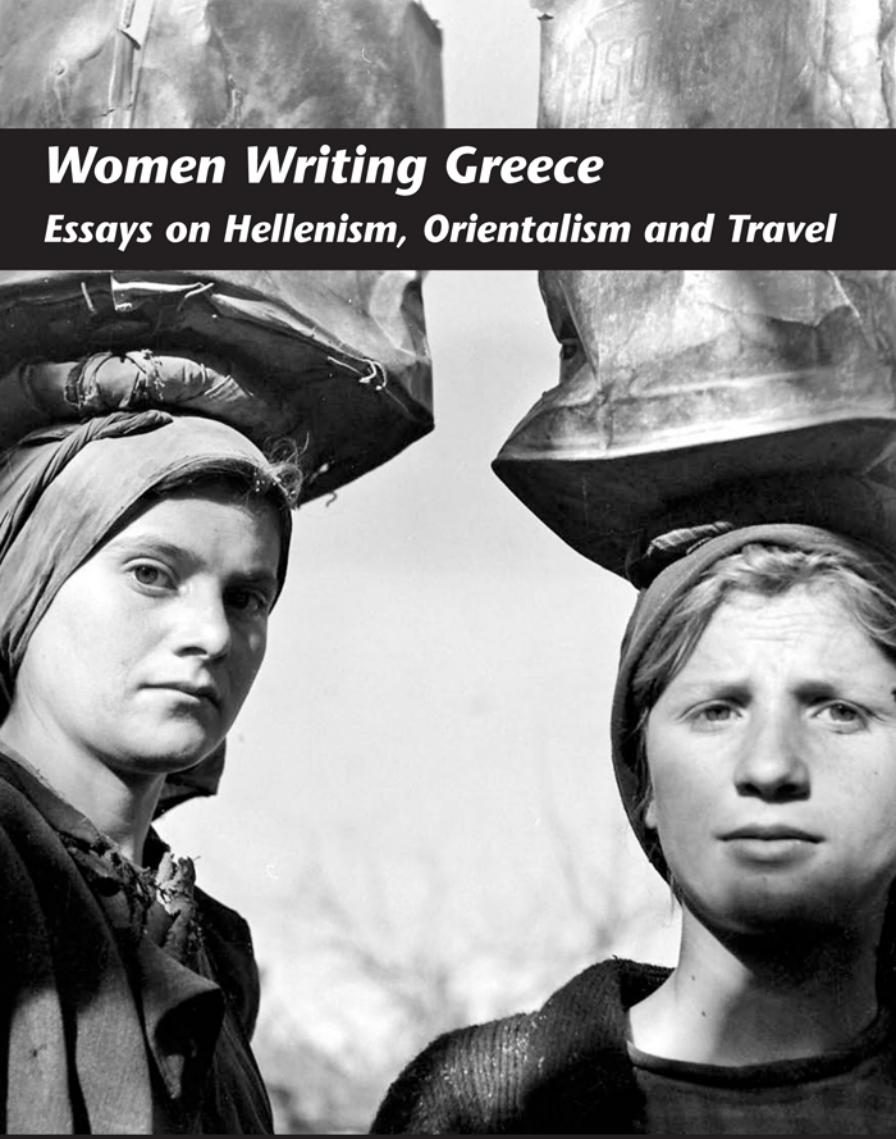
Women Writing Greece

Essays on Hellenism, Orientalism and Travel



Edited by
Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Efterpi Mitsi

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Women Writing Greece

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Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Efterpi Mitsi

Introduction

Travel writing on Greece reflects the ambiguous position of the nation itself. Situated at the threshold between past and present, East and West, Greece for the traveller questions the opposition between Europe and the Orient, but is also divided between its idealised timeless image and its modern incarnation.[1] Women travellers in Greece find this ambiguity particularly compelling, and, as this collection of essays illustrates, they observe and respond to the actuality of 'new Hellas' in distinct ways.

Women Writing Greece examines for the first time representations of modern Greece by women who have visited the country as travellers, writers, artists and scholars, or who have journeyed there though their imagination, using the country as the setting of their novels. Extending from the eighteenth century, the era of the posthumously published 'Letters' of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1763), the most famous woman traveller to the Orient, to the most recent travel books on Greece, such as Penelope Storace's *Dinner with Persephone* (1997), the essays assembled here explore the representation of Greece, raising the issue of the role of gender in travel and cultural mediation. They also challenge stereotypical views of 'the Greek journey', traditionally seen as an antiquarian or Byronic pursuit, arguing for women's participation in the discourses of Hellenism and orientalism.

This collection also aims at revealing an area of research, the relationship between women writers and Greece, which has been overlooked by scholars despite the interest during the last decades in women's texts as well as in travel writing. Several recent publications have approached the larger question of women's travel writing, but none have concentrated specifically on Greece, even when focusing on constructions of the Orient. Critics examining women's travel writing place their journeys and texts in the context of colonialism and imperialism, a focus that usually privileges non-

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[1] In 'Modern Greek Studies in the West: Between the Classics and the Orient', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 4. 1 (1986), 3-15, Margaret Alexiou argues that 'Greece occupies a special place "between the Classics and the Orient," since on the one hand western scholars have proved fascinated proponents and opponents of her links with ancient Hellas, while on the other hand, "Oriental" influences have always and already been present in popular culture', though, of course, '[t]he very concepts of, and distinctions between, "the classics" and "the Orient" are of western European epistemological origin' (p. 11). See also Gregory Jusdanis, 'East is East – West is West: It's a Matter of Greek Literary History', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 5.1 (1987), 1-14.

European and 'exotic' travels. Since *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said's groundbreaking study, and the many responses it generated, postcolonial theory has emphasised how orientalist and imperialist discourses are gendered and has explored the role of women in anti-colonial and postcolonial politics.[2] The liminal position of Greece has resulted in its exclusion from discussions of women's travel writing, whether in the Orient or in Europe. Billie Melman's *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East 1718-1918* (1992; 1995), for instance, ignores accounts of visits to Greece (which does not even appear in the Index). Although recent works have explored women's complex relationship to orientalism specifically in the context of the Ottoman Empire, such as Reina Lewis's *Gendering Orientalism* (1996) and *Rethinking Orientalism* (2004) and Meyda Yegenoglu's *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (1998), no mention has been made of Greece.

Similarly, works examining accounts of Greece by European authors, such as Richard Stoneman's *Literary Companion to Travel in Greece* (1984), are not concerned with women's writing. Even established critical studies of travel literature on Greece, such as Robert Eisner's *Travellers to an Antique Land: The History and Literature of Travel in Greece* (1991) assume that there is no writing by women before the post-war period, other than the token case of Montagu. Additionally, in works such as John Pemble's *Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (1987) or James Buzard's *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (1993) there is only a peripheral concern with travel and tourism to Greece. In her pioneering study, *Topographies of Hellenism: Mapping the Homeland* (1995), Artemis Leontis (one of the contributors to our collection) includes a brief discussion of Virginia Woolf but does not address the issue of women travellers.

Although there is a growing interest in representations of the Ottoman Empire by European travellers and writers, evidenced by recent publications such as Gerald MacLean's, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (2006), Greece, parts of which were under

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[2] See notably, Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds, *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), Andrew Parker et al., eds, *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1992), Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) and *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

Ottoman control until 1912, is never examined. This neglect is surprising given the importance of Hellenism in Western and especially British culture,[3] as well as the great number of travellers and authors inspired by Greece. A possible reason is that Greece complicates the typical postcolonial model, having been colonized by a non-Western power, the Ottoman Empire, though it could be argued that the British 'protection' of the Ionian Islands (1807-1863) would certainly qualify as at the very least, a 'semicolonial' model, [4] described by a senior British administrator as a 'sort of middle state between a colony and a perfectly independent country, without in some respects possessing the advantages of either'.[5] There are other connections that can be established through a postcolonial frame: in his account of the nation's ideological formation, Stathis Gourgouris connects the story of Greece with that of India: 'Both are burdened with a classical past, a similar trap for the nationalist phantasm: modern malaise to be overcome and ancient glory to be regained'.[6] Likewise, for Gregory Jusdanis, Greece, 'as the first nation to declare itself independent from the Ottoman Empire and as one of the earliest nation-states in Europe, […] is eminently postcolonial';[7] or, as Edmund Lyons, British Minister in Athens between 1835 and 1849 had put it: 'A really independent Greece is an absurdity'.[8] Finally, in the context of the

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[3] For comprehensive accounts of the influence of Hellenism in British (mainly Victorian) culture, see Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), and G. W. Clarke, ed., *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For panoramic and critical analyses of the phenomenon, see Vassilis Lambropoulos, *The Rise of Eurocentrism: Anatomy of Interpretation* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1993) and Simon Goldhill, *Who Needs Greek? Contests in the Cultural History of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[4] The term 'semicolonial' is borrowed from Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes, eds, *Semicolonial Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[5] Cited in Robert Holland and Diana Markides, *The British and the Hellenes: Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 15. Holland and Markides argue that this 'idiosyncratic Protectorate' provided the 'first prototype of Britain's classic engagement with "modern" anti-colonial resistance or nationalism – and [. . .] a nineteenth-century model for later British 'decolonization' (pp. 14-15). For an engaging account of the Anglo-Hellenic relationships that developed during the years of the Ionian Protectorate, see also Thomas W. Gallant, *Experiencing Dominion: Culture, Identity, and Power in the British Mediterranean* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

[6] Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 6.

[7] Gregory Jusdanis, 'Modern Greek! Why?', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 15.2 (1997), 167-174, (p. 172).

[8] Cited in Holland and Markides, p. 10

Balkans, a region functioning as a colonial paradigm within the geographical borders of Europe, [9] the case of Greece is further layered by ambiguity and complexity, both in terms of foreign perceptions and self-definition. Arguably, then, to adapt Michael Herzfeld's term, what travellers (and theorists) have been dealing with in their accounts of modern Greece is an 'absent presence', a 'crypto-colony'.[10]

The following essays propose to chart and illuminate this 'hidden' territory and open up a new area of research that raises specific questions about travel and women's role in the discourses of Hellenism and orientalism. Arranged chronologically and thematically, they delineate the representation of Greece in women's texts from the first encounters with a strange land in the eighteenth century to late twentieth-century attempts to go beyond the familiar, tourist-friendly destination. The contributors interpret specific texts and authors through the common perspectives of Hellenism, orientalism and travel, either foregrounding forgotten and less-known figures and narratives or looking at well-known ones from an original angle.

Accounts from the eighteenth century show Greece to be a dangerous and remote place, especially for women, who do not fit the period's image of travellers as intrepid explorers, scientists, or cultural interpreters. Yet, the two women who dared visit Greece in that period, famously sought 'exact geographies': 'with Homer in hand', Lady Mary Montagu dwelt on Alexander Pope's new translation *in situ*, while Lady Elizabeth Craven published her *Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople* (1789) with a view to contesting Montagu's previous account of the East. Neither antiquarians nor scholars, both women nevertheless matched text with place in highly influential ways. In 'Lady Elizabeth Craven's Letters from Athens and the Female Picturesque', Efterpi Mitsi examines Lady Elizabeth Craven's epistolary travelogue, especially her letters from Athens, in relation to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763), arguing that Craven's rivalry with Montagu and her critical stance toward the Orient depend on the historical developments which turned Britain into a global power, as well as on the change in aesthetic sensibilities from the beginning to the end of the eighteenth century. Craven, who was the first woman travel

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[9] For accounts of native, Greek and Western ideological constructions of the Balkans, see Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Dimitris Tziovas, ed., *Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2003).

[10] Michael Herzfeld, 'The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101. 4 (2002), 899-926, (pp. 899, 900).

writer to visit Athens, offers a fragmented and idiosyncratic vision of Greece, asserting her denial of the pursuit of antiquity displayed by Montagu and by other eighteenth-century male travellers. Rather than describing the antiquities, Craven focuses on the picturesque in private spaces, such as the Turkish baths of Athens. Craven's text foreshadows the gendered ideology of the separate spheres by emphasizing the female picturesque, the mundane and domestic, evident in that period in women's travel writing from the colonies. Craven's description of spaces either ignored by or inaccessible to male travellers reveals the curiosity that shapes the author's narrative persona and represents a development in travel writing, determined not only by gender but also by the search for new sources of aesthetic pleasure.

Lady Montagu and Lady Craven's legacy was fully realised in the next century, when women travellers proved Mary Astell's claim, in her 1724 preface to Montagu's letters, that 'a lady has the skill to strike out a new path'. The first nineteenth-century Englishwoman who visited Greece was the notorious Lady Hester Stanhope, whose journey, however, has reached posterity through the voice of her physician and travel companion Dr. Charles Meryon. Vassiliki Markidou in 'Travels Off-Centre: Lady Hester Stanhope in Greece', analyses the ways in which Lady Hester Stanhope's gender shapes her representation of early-nineteenth century Greece and Greek women in her travel report and vice versa. Markidou argues that Stanhope's travel marks the effort to fashion a self through a complex textual identity, including multiple, ex-centric (and eccentric) positions, which co-exist uneasily with her own centrality in terms of racial, national, and class origins. Stanhope's travel narrative, narrated by Dr. Charles Meryon and published in 1846, seven years after her death, disrupts and reinforces the stock construction of the British Empire as a male space. Markidou sheds light on Stanhope's participation in as well as challenge of masculinist and imperialist discourse, and reconstructs a persona which emerges fragmentary and distorted through the mediation of the male narrator.

Earlier in the nineteenth century, however, the Greek war of independence and the movement of Philhellenism had inspired women writers, such as Lady Morgan (published under the name 'Sydney Owenson') and Mary Shelley to write novels with a Greek setting and heroines who represent the emergent nation. Although neither author travelled to Greece, Morgan's *Woman or Ida of Athens* (1809) and Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) subsume contemporary travel accounts of Greece and complicate the question of cultural representation, telling stories of movement from Britain to Greece and vice versa. In 'A Gendered Vision of Greekness: Lady Morgan's *Woman or: Ida of Athens*', Evgenia Sifaki connects Morgan's 1809 novel with Madame de Staël's *Corinne or Italy*, written two years earlier,

investigating the author's contribution to an early nineteenth-century European configuration of Greece. Despite not having been to Greece herself, Morgan intended her novel as a detailed and reliable historical representation of the place and its historical situation, advancing the cause of the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire. In her analysis, Sifaki points out that Morgan feminises Athens and identifies her heroine, Ida, the epitome of 'Woman', with the 'authentic' expression of Greekness, and argues that the novelist's imaginary version of Greece consolidates her political and gendered voice. In a similar way, in 'Real Selves and Fictional Nobodies: Women's Travel Writing and the Production of Identities', Maria Koundoura compares the construction of two female narrative identities set against an actual and an imagined Greece, as featured in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*. Montagu's *Letters* helped define the literary style of its time, the emergent category of the real, while at the same time constructing the cultural fantasy that was Greece in the English literary imagination. Through the relationship between Raymond, the Byronic protagonist of *The Last Man*, and Evadne, the native love interest, and later traveller to England, Shelley engages with a more ambiguous and dangerous fantasy of Hellenism, orientalised and dangerous, or, in the novel's terms, a plague threatening the West with annihilation.

While novelists used travellers' tales, the writing of women such as Felicia Skene, who lived and travelled in Greece between 1838 and 1845, confounds generic categories, as she self-consciously weaves allegorical tales and orientalist descriptions in her representation of a newly independent Greece. Skene's account of her residence in Athens between 1838 and 1845, *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks* (1847), as Churnjeet Kaur Mahn argues in 'The Sculpture and the Harem: Ethnography in Felicia Skene's *Wayfaring Sketches*', is a travelogue typical in its approach to Greece as a semi-antique landscape, abounding in silent ruins for the appreciation of an audience versed in the classics. Skene was interested in portraying a Greece that had recently emerged from Ottoman rule and explored this through the representation of a young Greek woman, Katinko, who serves as an allegory for the modern Greek nation, described simultaneously as an antique sculpture and an orientalised slave. For Mahn the attempt to historicise Katinko as a character illustrates how visions of Greece were removed from a contemporary timeframe. While Katinko may have escaped a Turkish harem, the Orient continues to infect, or disrupt Skene's vision of her as a paradigm of Hellenic beauty. This offers a crucial variation on the traditional harem travel narrative by women: penetrating the harem in this context acts as a metaphorical device that consigns Greek

women to what Homi Bhabha might call a hybrid or 'interstitial' space,[11] in which their Western sisters might 'intervene' only temporarily and not without risk.

The nineteenth century saw women travelling to Greece alone for the first time, and publishing accounts which enjoyed great popularity and fed the British public's interest in Greece. Such writings can now be seen to have negotiated different genres and to have allowed women to assume complex textual identities. These accounts of visits to Greece in the last decades of the nineteenth century reflect a growing confidence in the ability of women to withstand the rigours of travel; their writers often revel in the vicarious reconstruction of dangers and misadventures they could have faced, while being constantly reminded of their eccentricity as unaccompanied females. Victorian travellers revisited the paradox of Byron's famous phrase 'Sad Greece, fair relic', although theirs was a different journey: instead of Byron's Greece, a place defined by his poetry as a landscape of the mind and a home of a noble cause they encountered a nation claiming a European voice and identity, a place of complexity and confusion. In the era of high imperialism, the response to Greece has to be examined in the context of the imperial project, which connected the British, rather than the lowly modern Greeks, to the ancient Athenians. The essays discussing women's travel writing from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century cannot therefore ignore the writers' complicity with imperialist operations that constitute modern Greece as the Orient while appropriating its classical past. Indeed, Virginia Woolf's pronouncement that 'Germans are tourists and Frenchmen are tourists but Englishmen are Greeks'[12] raises a significant question about Englishwomen's relation to Greece

The Victorian ambiguity toward Greece is evident in TD Olverson's '"A world without woman in any true sense": Gender and Hellenism in Emily Pfeiffer's *Flying Leaves from East and West*'. Olverson provides a close reading of Pfeiffer's extraordinary travel narrative *Flying Leaves from East and West* (1885), maintaining that the author's late Victorian vision of Greece not only incorporates her aesthetic responses to the decaying monuments of the ancient Greeks, but also suggests how contemporary debates concerning class, racism, feminism and imperialism shape the observations of female travellers. In Pfeiffer's political narrative the splendours of the ancient past are considered alongside the struggles of the present. Pfeiffer's poem 'Hellas' (1880) celebrated the Greek War of

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[11] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 4, 7.

[12] Virginia Woolf, 'A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus', in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Susan Dick (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1989), pp. 63-68 (p. 63).

Independence in strictly Hellenist terms, but in *Flying Leaves*, published only five years later, Pfeiffer reveals a deep ambivalence about the ancient culture that she had previously so revered. Pfeiffer's account of her experiences in Turkey, including her encounter with Turkish women in a harem, throws into relief Victorian configurations of the Orient and the role of women in racist and imperialist discourses of the period. Pfeiffer's provocative narrative is considered alongside contemporary debates about the social and political position of women in England, as well as in the context of Victorian Aestheticism in order to argue that hers is a significant intervention in both.

At the turn of the century, women also begin to participate in the collection and classification of knowledge about Greece, contributing to the emergent discourses of archaeology, ethnography and anthropology. Following the institution of Greece as a modern nation-state, their accounts can be seen to form part of its ideological construction by the West. More importantly, however, some of the writing from this period also demonstrates women's determination to declare their intellectual independence. Despite strong resistance from those professional and academic societies which regarded themselves as guardians of scientific and cultural knowledge, educated women, following their researches in Greece, could now make a strong case for membership. Indeed, for a woman like Jane Ellen Harrison, Cambridge classicist and pioneer of the Ritualist school in anthropology and religion, the trip to Greece helped shift both her attitude towards her subject and her understanding of women's intellectual and social position.

The intellectual production of early twentieth-century women travellers to Greece forms, according to Martha Klironomos in 'British Women Travellers to Greece, 1880-1930', an archaeological-topographical model of travel, a mode of historical experience that deviates from the mainly literary Victorian imaginings of Greece. Considering the travelogues of academics (Jane Ellen Harrison), artists (Mrs Russell Barrington, Vera Willoughby), intellectuals (Virginia Woolf, Ethel Smyth), photographers (Agnes Conway) and wives of diplomats (Betty Cunliffe-Owen), Klironomos illustrates how women narrators employ rhetorical strategies that stray from the tradition set by earlier male travellers to Greece, whose travelogues became an ideological space in which to assess Greece's internal and external politics from the standpoint of upper-class British male subjectivity.

Twentieth-century travellers often remark on the sense of 'belatedness', which a visit to Greece impresses on them. As the young Virginia Woolf put it in 1906, during the first of her two 'Grand Tours': 'You have the feeling very often in Greece, that the pageant has passed long ago, and you are come

too late, and it matters very little what you think or feel'.[13] In her diary of that first visit (another one would follow in 1932), Woolf partly reproduces the biases of her time and class; to the wilfully anachronistic gaze of the modern tourist, however well-educated or culturally privileged, 'old Greece' is but a mirage. Yet, like other women visitors of the time, Woolf finds much to interest her among the ruins: 'Athens means many more things than the Acropolis & the sanest plan is to separate the quick from the dead, the old from the new, so that the two images shall not vex each other'.[14] As her accounts of modern Greece show, while Woolf dutifully traces continuities with the past, she focuses with greater relish on the liveliness and 'impurity' of a present, which she now views as a freer, rather than fallen, state.

The impure modernity of twentieth-century Greece, both confusing and empowering for women, appears in the approaches of modern writers and artists such as Eva Palmer, and still persists in contemporary accounts like those of Gillian Bouras and Patricia Storace. Eva Palmer's memoir and Gillian Bouras's autobiographical novels both tell stories of suspended journeys, of women who mingled and stayed in Greece, in Palmer's case due to marrying the Greek poet Angelos Sikelianos and working with him towards the revival of Greek drama. **'**Eva Palmer's Distinctive Greek Journey' by Artemis Leontis recovers Palmer's untold story. After travelling to Greece in 1906, this American artist decided to stay there for a quarter century, exploring her ideas about drama and music *in situ*. While most studies of travel follow people on the move, Leontis is interested here in those who stay. By suspending her journey and working in Greece rather than in Paris or New York, Eva Palmer both accomplished something exceptional – she made a powerful contribution to the revival of Greek drama – and condemned herself to obscurity and financial ruin. Leontis argues that stories of suspended journeys often have women as their protagonists, yet remain largely forgotten or indistinguishable from stories of the foreign wife. Known today in Greece only as the wife of the poet Angelos Sikelianos, Palmer is unknown in her own country despite her contribution to theories of performance and musicology. Through a close reading of her autobiography and letters, Leontis concludes that Palmer changed Greece while being changed by it.

The motif of the foreign wife reappears in the writings of Bouras, the Australian author of a fascinating trilogy based on her sojourn in Greece, due to her marriage to a Greek. Bouras provides in this collection a test case for feminist and postcolonial readings of modern Greece and further complicates

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[13] Virginia Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals 1897-1909*, ed. by Mitchell A. Leaska (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990), p. 324.

[14] Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice*, p. 340.

the configuration of travel, gender, Hellenism and orientalism, as Christina Dokou in 'No Place Like Home: Gillian Bouras and the "Others"' and Helga Ramsey-Kurz in 'Going Back to the Mother: Postcolonial Inscriptions and Migrant Tales' offer alternative interpretations of Bouras's suspended journey. Dokou views the antagonistic-symbiotic relationship between author (the Australian traveller) and subject (her Greek mother-in-law) in Gillian Bouras's novel *Aphrodite and the Others* (1997) as the ideal literary-cultural test case for exploring the mutable gendering of women travellers. Both women assume a twofold self: one given to them by their gender itself, and one by their relation to a culturally dominant environment, the definition of which may vary for each woman. Dokou argues that Bouras expands the relation further by introducing the role of orality versus textuality in her travelling experience: her mother-in-law's illiteracy becomes a metonymy for the oral culture of Greece and the unspoken rules the foreign woman must master or perish. Bouras translates Aphrodite's (and Greece's) enigma into textuality – her Australian cultural staple, her own authorial *modus operandi* and writes a book about it. It is in this way that she transforms her environment, turning it from a vexing present to a quasi-mythic past, which she can command and encompass though superior literary expertise.

Ramsey-Kurz discusses the case of Bouras from a different angle: as the widow of a Greek immigrant to Australia, Bouras has a highly ambivalent relationship to Greece. In the accounts of her extended sojourns in her late husband's homeland, Bouras assumes the point of view of someone who is foreigner and family, outsider and insider, traveller and resident, novice and expert, student and teacher at once. Ramsey-Kurz argues that in the process of recording her insights the author becomes aware of steering precariously close to re-applying the same questionable practices of inscription to which Australia and its people were subjected under British colonisation. Bouras discursively re-exports linguistic deprivation and cultural disadvantage to Europe, by returning to the alleged birthplace of Western civilisation and representing it as a complete cultural wasteland. With this provocative manoeuvre, she not only deflates established notions of Europe's cultural sovereignty over its former colonies but also goes against the grain of the traditional travel narrative: rather than a widening of the explorer's horizon, she identifies a growing sense of boundaries, of one's own epistemological and linguistic limitations as the traveller's most essential experience in her passage into foreign territory.

A re-examination of the significance of Hellenism in the late twentieth century concludes the discussion of women's constructions of Greece. Asimina Karavanta in **'**The Greek Ideal in Patricia Storace's *Dinner with Persephone* and Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*', explores the narrative

deployment of the construct of 'the Greek ideal', as the sacred origin of a civilisation and sole property of the West, in two instances of travel writing: Christa Wolf's *Cassandra* (1984) and Patricia Storace's *Dinner With Persephone* (1997). Focusing on the relationship between mythical place and the historical space of travelling, Wolf's treatment of the figure of Cassandra and her attempt to unravel the teleological narrative of history is juxtaposed with Storace's travel narrative, which fictionalises the historical by revisiting the mythical through the image of Persephone. In Storace's text, Karavanta argues, Greece as ideal functions as a measure for the author's ironic representation and critique of contemporary Greece, whose reality is seen as a foil to that imagined past. By contrast, for Wolf, this ideal is not to be retrieved but questioned in the light of the complex actuality of both traveller and visited space.

Although it would be simplistic to read women's writing on Greece as a homogeneous body of (proto)feminist texts, the incorporation of these narratives in an analysis of Hellenist, orientalist, travel, and life-writing discourses does constitute an alternative history, a discrete representation composed of fragments and glimpses, but driven by the desire for and claim to a bigger picture. According to Joan Scott the 'realization of the radical potential of women's history' does not involve 'the recounting of great deeds performed by women' but comes in the writing of texts that 'focus on women's experience *and* analyze the ways in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics'.[15] To their inscriptions of Greece, the women featured in this volume bring a sense of imperial entitlement countered by eccentric vision, a recognition of the difference and specificity of gender across cultural and ideological boundaries, and equal amounts of conformity and daring, confusion and enchantment by a liminal land, simultaneously classical, oriental, Balkan, and European.

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Efterpi Mitsi

Lady Elizabeth Craven's Letters from Athens and the Female Picturesque

Abstract

Lady Elizabeth Craven's epistolary travelogue, *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople* (1789), especially her letters from Athens, present not only the author's rivalry with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and her *Turkish Embassy Letters* but also a critical stance toward the Orient, which depends on the historical developments which turned Britain into a global power and on the change in aesthetic sensibilities from the beginning to the end of the eighteenth century. Craven, who was the first woman travel writer to visit Athens, offers a fragmented and idiosyncratic vision of Greece, asserting her denial of the pursuit of antiquity displayed by Montagu. Rather than describe the antiquities, Craven produces picturesque depictions of private spaces, which were either ignored by or inaccessible to male travellers. Her descriptions represent a development in travel writing, determined not only by gender but also by the search for new sources of aesthetic pleasure.

> Mine at present is a geographical intercourse with the world; and I like to find the road I travel smooth.
>
> Lady Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople* (1789)

In the eighteenth century Greece was a dangerous and remote place to visit, especially for women who did not fit the traveller's image as heroic explorer, serious scholar, or reliable cultural interpreter. The first woman traveller to Ottoman Greece, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who spent time in Thrace before her voyage in the Aegean Sea, never set foot on the famous sites of the Greek mainland; seen from the sea, Greece remained an unattainable dreamland. While sailing through Ottoman-held Greece on her way to Tunis from Constantinople in 1718, Montagu regretted not landing 'on the famed Peloponessus' [*sic*], complaining that, 'Instead of demi-gods and heroes I was credibly informed 'tis now overrun by robbers, and that I should run a great risk of falling into their hands by undertaking such a journey through a desert country'.[1]

Less than seventy years later, another Englishwoman took the risk. Lady Elizabeth Craven was the first female writer to visit Athens in 1786, and to challenge not only Montagu's fears, but also her famous representations of

[1] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, ed. by Malcolm Jack (London: Virago, 1994), letter L, pp. 147-48.

oriental women. Craven, a playwright and woman of letters, began her voyage after her legal separation from her husband, running away both from scandal and financial trouble. Craven's decision to travel to Turkey, visiting the same or similar sites as those described by Montagu, even including Greece in her tour, a place where her predecessor desired but did not dare to go, represents a conscious attempt to compete against Montagu, whose *Turkish Embassy Letters* had only been published in a pirated edition in 1763.

The reading of Craven's epistolary travelogue, *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, especially her letters from Athens, in relation to Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* reveals the origins of the ambivalent relationship between British women travellers and Greece, which developed in the following centuries, as independent Greece gradually became an intriguing destination for women. Craven's rivalry with Montagu and her critical stance toward the Orient depend on the historical developments which made Britain into a global power, as well as on the change in aesthetic sensibilities from the beginning to the end of the eighteenth century.

Greece in eighteenth-century travel literature

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Montagu sailed by the Greek islands, few travelogues on Greece were available to the British public; however, by the end of the century a number of travellers had published their accounts of Greece, encouraged not only by the interest in Greek antiquity but also by the increasing political importance of the Orient for Britain. Indeed, the fact that one of the most popular travel books of the era (five editions from 1744 to 1798), which included a lengthy tour of Greece, was written by a fictitious traveller, a 'Charles Thompson, Esq.',[2] indicates that there was an increasing market for 'Greece'. Thompson's travel book emphasises Britain's growing interest in Greece in the same way that Guillet de Saint George's fraudulent treatise on Athens in seventeenth-century France[3] revealed the public curiosity about the 'rediscovery' of Greek antiquities.[4]

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2 Charles Thompson, *The Travels of the Late Charles Thompson, Esq.*, 3 vols (London: Micklewright, 1752).

3 Guillet de Saint George, George, *Athènes ancienne et nouvelle* (Paris, 1675 and 1676). The book was soon translated in English as *An Account of a Late Voyage to Athens* (London, 1676).

4 Olga Augustinos, *French Odysseys: Greece in French Travel Literature from the Renaissance to the Romantic Era* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 112.

The positive reception of Craven's travelogue, which was published in 1789 in an expensive self-financed edition, is related to the British interest in the declining Ottoman empire as well as to the public's desire for original and colourful travel writing rather than the usual compilation of previous travellers' accounts, such as Thompson's *Travels* and James Porter's *Observations on the Religion, Law, Government, and Manners, of the Turks* (1768). Her account was published during the Russian and Austrian war against Turkey (1787-1792) and responded to Britain's anxiety about maintaining her trading interests in the area. Craven's writing emphasises the importance of direct experience in an era when the existence of travel literature, as the cases of Guillet's and Thompson's best-sellers attest, made it possible to compose travelogues relying on the accounts of previous travellers.

Moreover, the novelty of a woman travel writer was striking in comparison to the typical eighteenth-century traveller to the region, an antiquarian or archaeologist, like Charles Perry, Richard Pococke, Robert Wood, James Stuart, Nicholas Revett, and Richard Chandler, whose goal was to find, describe and in some cases sketch the ancient monuments. For example, the focus of Richard Chandler's *Travels in Asia Minor* (1775) and *Travels in Greece* (1776) is archaeological, characterised by a detailed description of the ancient cites and monuments, and exemplifying his scientific mission financed by the Society of Dilettanti.[5] On the contrary, Elizabeth Craven's account represents the exploits of an aristocratic and ambitious Englishwoman, travelling alone in regions where no other European woman had ever travelled before. Craven's personal notoriety attracted further interest in her work, evidenced by the reviews in influential journals, such as the *Monthly*, the *Critical*, and the *Analytical Review*, as well as by the two different French translations, which were published in the same year as her English edition.[6] Instead of the Acropolis of Athens, Craven is interested in the picturesque, in the private and domestic spaces, such as the Turkish baths of Athens. Craven's emphasis on the picturesque in her *Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople* foreshadows the gendered ideology of the separate spheres, evoking Mary Wollstonecraft's later pronouncement in her epistolary travel account of Scandinavia that women

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5 Richard Chandler, *Travels in Asia Minor* (Dublin: R. Marchbank, 1775) and *Travels in Greece* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1776).

6 Lady Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople* (London: G. G. J. & J. Robinson, 1789); *Voyage de Miladi Craven en Constantinople, par la Crimée en 1762*, traduit par M. D. (Paris: Durand, 1789 and 1792) and *Voyage en Crimée et à Constantinople en 1786*, traduit par M. Guedon de Berchere (Paris: Maradon, 1789). References to the English edition will henceforth be given in brackets after the respective quotations.

travellers are good at observing private, female spaces due to their sense of domesticity: 'wherever [she] goes, a little patch of household comfort grows beneath [her] feet'.[7]

A literary rivalry

Craven's use of the picturesque in relation to the adoption of an emergent imperial voice becomes evident when juxtaposed to the writing of her predecessor, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose *Letters* haunt Craven's *Journey*. Craven's decision to visit Turkey, writing letters from many of the exact same locations as her predecessor, appears as a literary contest with political implications, since she consciously draws a very different picture of the Ottoman empire and of its inhabitants. Craven's goal is not only to revisit the sites described by Montagu, in particular the harems and baths – places completely inaccessible to the male travellers to the Orient – but also to travel to the sites Montagu did not visit, to the islands of Greece and especially to Athens. Her description of Athens, which consists of a visit to the local hammam right after the tour of the Acropolis, subverts Montagu's famous description of the Turkish bath at Sofia and aims at repudiating the travel writing of her predecessor, exposing it as mere lies and fantasies. Although by the 1780s the authenticity of the 1763 edition of *The Turkish Embassy Letters* was not in doubt, Craven argued that Montagu 'did not write even a line' of her letters (p. 105), and that the real writers of Montagu's text were male.[8]

Craven's refutation of Montagu is according to Katherine Turner 'a significant contribution to an emergent colonial discourse, displacing the [latter's] classical, tolerant and largely ahistorical stance'.[9] Montagu's Neoclassicism is substituted by Craven's focus on what she finds picturesque, a term that becomes increasingly popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although the word had already been used by Alexander Pope in describing Homer's prose, William Gilpin in his *Essay on Prints* defined it as 'expressive of that peculiar beauty which is agreeable in a

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7 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1795), in *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark and Memoirs of the Author of `The Rights of Women'*, ed. by Richard Holmes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 105.

8 Katherine S. H. Turner, 'From Classical to Imperial: Changing Visions of Turkey in the Eighteenth Century', in *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, ed. by Steve Clark (London and New York: Zed Books, 1999), pp. 113-28 (pp. 113-14).

9 Turner, p. 115.

picture', shifting, however, the emphasis of the picturesque from pictures to the landscape through a series of guidebooks.[10] Both William Gilpin and Sir Uvedale Price in his *Essay on the Picturesque*[11] sought to define a quality somewhere between the sublime and the beautiful, characterised by 'ruggedness', 'ruin', and 'the destruction of symmetry'. The picturesque inspired neither the astonishment of the sublime nor the simple pleasure of the beautiful but instead curiosity, developing into a whole set of theories, ideas, and conventions centring on the question of how one looks at landscape. A hybrid of the beautiful and the sublime,[12] the picturesque defines aesthetic experiences that do not fit either of the other categories and is less rigid in its characteristics, thus subverting the sexual politics of Burkean aesthetics. According to Edmund Burke, the sublime is masculine whereas the beautiful is associated with feminine qualities such as smallness and delicacy, an idea that was later confronted and refuted by Mary Wollstonecraft.[13] However, like the sublime, the interest in the picturesque represents a search for aesthetic pleasure outside the realm of social art.

The lack of rigidity, the emphasis on curiosity and the gender ambiguity of the picturesque, as opposed to the aesthetic categories of the sublime and the beautiful, were appealing to a traveller like Elizabeth Craven, seeking to redefine her own self through travel after scandal, separation and financial difficulties at home. On the one hand, the 'female picturesque', the emphasis on the mundane and domestic evident in women's travel writing from the colonies, encloses the objects of the traveller's gaze in an aesthetic stasis; on the other hand, in Craven's travelogue, it reveals the curiosity that shapes the author's narrative persona and the recognition that she herself is a spectacular

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10 William Gilpin, *An Essay on Prints*, 3rd edn (London, 1781), p.xii. See also William Gilpin, "On Picturesque Beauty (1791), in *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; And On Sketching Landscape...* (London, 1794).

11 Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape*, revised edition (London, 1796).

12 Nicola Trott, 'The Picturesque, the Beautiful and The Sublime', in *A Companion to Romanticism*, ed. by Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 72-90 (p. 73).

13 Edmund Burke's influential 1757 treatise on the sublime and the beautiful, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. by James T. Boulton (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 110, 115-16, introduces a politicised aesthetics, presenting a notion of beauty that involves weakness, smoothness and timidity and excluding women from the domain of aesthetic discourse. Yet, women authors like Wollstonecraft attacked Burke's sexist aesthetics, developing a counter-aesthetics of their own. As Elizabeth A. Bohls argues in *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 14, women travel writers in the late-eighteenth century were concerned with the picturesque and the sublime rather than with the beautiful.

object, as Donna Landry puts it, 'impersonating Englishness both within and across the gender divide'.[14] Examining the role of Englishwomen in colonial India, Sara Suleri argues that the 'feminine picturesque' transfixed 'a dynamic cultural confrontation into a still life'.[15] However, Craven's description of spaces and places ignored by male travellers embodies a development in travel writing, determined not only by gender but also by the search for new sources of aesthetic pleasure. Fifty years later, in her review of twelve recently published travel books by women, the travel writer Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, argued that whereas 'a man either starts on his travels with a particular object in view, or failing that, drives a hobby of his own the whole way before him', a woman traveller 'is less troubled with preconceived ideas as to what is most important to observe [...] picking up material much more indiscriminately'.[16] Craven's fragmented and idiosyncratic vision of Greece anticipates Eastlakes's pronouncement, asserting her denial of the pursuit of antiquity displayed by Montagu and by the eighteenth-century male travellers to the region.

Montagu's 'Greece'

It is indeed an irony that the first Englishwoman to visit the most famous site of antiquity was Craven, rather than Montagu who is regarded as the first 'literary' traveller to Greece, the 'first of the English to write verses on the modern Greeks' and to emphasise 'the contrast between ancients and moderns in Greece'.[17] Montagu's frustrated desire to transcend history, to experience the past in the present is evident in her letter from Tunis, dated July 31, 1718:

> I am so angry with myself that I will pass by all the other islands with this general reflection, that 'tis impossible to imagine anything more agreeable than this journey would have been between two or three thousand years since, when, after drinking a dish of tea with Sapho [*sic*], I might have gone, the same evening, to visit the temple of Homer in Chios, and passed this voyage in taking plans of magnificent temples, delineating the miracles of

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[14] Donna Landry, 'Horsy and Persistently Queer: Imperialism, Feminism and Bestiality', *Textual Practice*, 15 (2001), 467-485 (p. 471).

[15] Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 76.

[16] Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, *Quarterly Review* 76 (1845) cited in Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 203.

[17] Terence Spencer, *Fair Greece, Sad Relic: Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron* (1954, reprint, New York: Octagon, 1973), p. 147.

> statuaries, and conversing with the most polite and most gay of mankind. Alas! Art is extinct here, the wonders of nature alone remain.[18]

Not only are the Greek islands invested with myth and desire, but Sappho is transformed into a contemporary as well, sharing 'a dish of tea' with the English poet. By mapping the modern landscape of Greece in terms of its classical geography and by contrasting nature and culture, Montagu at the end of the passage dismisses the present without witnessing the contemporary reality of Greece.

Montagu's desire to read ancient Greek literature in its 'authentic' locations was only partly fulfilled a year earlier, in Adrianople. There, near the river Hebrus, she relived the myths of Orpheus, finding traces of the past in the present, in women weaving at their looms, in the customs, costumes and dances of the Greeks. As she wrote to her then friend Alexander Pope, who had just completed his translation of the *Iliad* and was then working on the *Odyssey*, the ancient texts came alive in the pastoral setting of Thrace:

> I read over your Homer here with an infinite pleasure, and find several little passages explained, that I did not before entirely comprehend the beauty of; many of the customs, and much of the dress then in fashion, being yet retained, and I don't wonder to find more remains here of an age so distant, than is to be found in any other country.[19]

Montagu's claim to a more profound understanding of Homer in Thrace foreshadows Robert Wood's theory presented a few decades later in his *Essay on the Original Genius of Homer* (1750). Wood conflated travel and the reading of the classics, by drawing the material for his interpretation of ancient poetry from his first-hand experience of the supposed Homeric localities.[20] Wood argued that to better understand Homer, the reader should encounter the 'authentic' landscape, since the famous localities are in essence unchanged: 'he enters most into the Spirit of the Copy, who is best acquainted with the Original. If, therefore, we would do the poet justice, we should approach as near as possible, to the time and place, when and where he wrote'.[21]

Alexander Pope's own letter to Montagu uses the imagery of light and dark, sun and shade, to emphasise that she is in the unique and privileged

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18 Montagu, p. 148.

19 Montagu, (letter XXXI,1 April 1717), pp. 74-75.

20 David Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 66.

21 Robert Wood, *An Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* (1775, reprint, New York: Garland, 1971), p. ix.

position to read Homer, that is *his* Homer, illuminated (both literally and figuratively) by the light of Greece:

> I make not the least question but you could give me great eclaircissements [*sic*] upon many passages in Homer since you have been enlightened by the same sun that inspired the father of poetry. You are now glowing under the climate that animated him; you may see his images rising more boldly about you, in the very scenes of his story and action; you may lay the immortal work on some broken column of a hero's sepulchre; and read the fall of Troy in the shade of a Trojan ruin. But if, to visit the tomb of so many heroes, you have not the heart to pass over the sea where once a lover perished; you may at least, at ease, in your window, contemplate the fields of Asia, in such a dim and remote prospect, as you have of Homer in my translation.[22]

The analogy between Montagu's contemplation of the 'exact geography of Homer'[23] and Pope's translation of Homer into English complicates the relation between antiquity and modernity and between Greece and Britain. The juxtaposition of the 'immortal work' with the 'broken column of a hero's sepulchre' underlines the desire and nostalgia for a glorious past, a lost origin of beauty and culture, as well as the sense of possession and privilege offered by the knowledge of classical antiquity. The immortality of poetry emerges in the midst of decay and death, guaranteed by Pope's own translation, however 'dim and remote' it may be. Montagu, though represented in his letter as a voyeur rather than a traveller, provides a link between Homer and Pope, Greece and Britain, original and copy. In another letter, affecting the same gallant humility, Pope adds, 'it is never to be repaired the loss that Homer has sustained for want of my translating him in Asia. You will come hither full of criticisms against a man who wanted nothing to be in the right but to have your company'.[24] Unable to acquaint himself with the 'Original', Pope experiences the Homeric landscape vicariously through Montagu's 'contemplat[ion] of the fields of Asia'.

However, Thrace, where Montagu encountered the living spirit of antiquity, was neither Athens nor 'the famed Peloponessus [...] now overrun by robbers'. In her letters Montagu either imagines the alien culture as still inhabiting the distant past, thus denying the contemporaneity of different cultures,[25] or effaces the present, dismissing it as alien and degenerate ('art is

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22 Alexander Pope, *The Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. by Whitwell Elwin, 10vols (London: John Murray, 1871-89), IX, 397.

23 Montagu, letter L, p. 146.

24 Pope, IX, 382.

25 Jill Campbell, 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Historical Machinery of Female Identity', in *History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by Beth Fowkes Tobin (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), pp. 64-85 (p. 75)

extinct here'). Montagu's ambivalent relation to Greece exemplifies Johannes Fabian's theory that relations between the West and its Other 'were conceived not only as difference, but as distance in space and Time',[26] as western travellers experienced the other culture not as synchronous, contemporary to theirs, but as existing in their own culture's history or prehistory. Although the Hellenic ideal in eighteenth-century Britain 'was not a monolithic thing', but involved a variety of facets, shifts and possibilities,[27] most contemporary travellers agreed with Montagu that the text (read in the original or even in Pope's translation) was a better place to pursue the eternal 'Greece', to 'visit the temple of Homer' in Montagu's words, rather than the actual place. As Montagu's distinction between heroes and robbers suggests ('Instead of demi-gods and heroes I was credibly informed [Peloponnesus] is now overrun by robbers'),[28] travellers believed that the modern Greeks 'depressed by ages of misery' had lost 'their native genius', retaining only a few marks of their 'glorious ancestors'.[29] Although the British (somewhat reluctantly) recognised modern Greeks as the remote descendants of the classical Hellenes, they argued that centuries of Ottoman rule had corrupted their culture, an attitude illustrated by Montagu's perception of contemporary Greece as 'desert country'. Her attitude is therefore not entirely 'ahistorical' but 'a confluence of imperial ambitions and personal imperviousness characteristic of English people abroad during this period'.[30] Montagu's 'Greece' is related to a developing Eurocentric ideology, which assigned to modern Greeks the passive role of the living ancestors of European civilisation,[31] without however incorporating them into Europe.

Temple and Grotto

Whereas Montagu's vision of Greece is classical, connected to her own identity as reader and writer, Craven's appreciation of antiquities depends on their value as commodities, as 'valuable curiosit[ies]', objects worthy of adorning 'a virtuoso's cabinet' (p. 206). In the letter about her visit to the

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[26] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Objects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p.147.

[27] Constantine, p. 2.

[28] Montagu, letter L, p. 148.

[29] Lord Charlemont (James Caulfield), *The Travels of Lord Charlemont in Greece and Turkey, 1749*, ed. by W. B. Stanford and E. J. Finopoulos (London: Trinigraph for the A.G. Leventis Foundation, 1984), p. 120.

[30] Landry, p. 471.

[31] See Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the Looking Glass*: *Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 105.

Acropolis, Craven avoids describing the temples, focusing instead on her disappointment at not being able to collect some of the broken pieces of the Parthenon:

> The Temple of Minerva, in the citadel of Athens, was used by the Turks as a magazine for powder, which blowing up has flung down such a quantity of beautiful sculpture that I should be very happy to have permission to pick up the broken pieces on the ground – but, alas, Sir, I cannot even have a little finger or a toe, for the Ambassador who had been a whole year negotiating for permission to convey to Constantinople a fragment he had pitched upon, and thought himself sure of, will be sadly disappointed. The sailors were prepared with cranes, and every thing necessary to convey this beautiful relick on board the Tarleton; when after the governor of the citadel, a Turk, had received us with great politeness, he took Mr. de Truguet aside, and told him, unless he chose to endanger his life, he must give up the thought of touching any thing [...] we returned to the Consul's very much concerned at the excessive injustice and ignorance of the Turks, who have really not the smallest idea of the value of the treasures they possess, and destroy them wantonly on every occasion. (pp. 256-57)

Craven's concern about the fate of the antiquities is rather hypocritical, as it is not based on her admiration of ancient art but on their market value, as objects coveted by connoisseurs, like M. de Choiseul Gouffier (the French Ambassador to the Porte who arranged her voyage to Greece) who was an avid collector.[32] Her indignation is yet another opportunity to disparage the Turks, who throughout her travelogue are characterised as 'ignorant', 'idle', 'stupid' and 'indolent'. It is also striking that the only thing she writes about the sculpture of the Parthenon, still relatively unknown in Britain, is that it is so 'beautiful' that she would be happy even to get 'a little finger or toe', a humorous and even self-deprecating remark that sets her apart from the serious antiquarians and collectors like Choiseul Gouffier. Unlike Montagu, Craven is clearly not interested in antiquity. Throughout her voyage to Greece she proclaims her preference for 'Nature', for picturesque landscapes rather than 'man-made spaces'.[33] In Letter LIV, written in Athens on May 21, 1786, she describes in detail her visit to the cave of Antiparos, a natural wonder, which constitutes one of the highlights of her entire journey. In this temple of Nature, Craven exhibits both her sensibility (in the preface to her book she defines herself as a sentimental traveller, seeking 'the romantic and the picturesque') and her courage, since she descends to the grotto despite her fears: 'I confess to you, that had it not been that my pride rose superior to my fears, I never would have gone down' (p. 253).

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[32] Marie-Gabriel-Auguste-Florent Comte de Choiseul Gouffier was also the author of the influential travelogue *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, first published in Paris in 1782.

[33] Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 87.

Craven's pride in her own achievement, confirmed by the admiring Frenchmen who visited the cave (she quotes a M. de Truguet exclaiming, 'jamais femme n'a descendue dans la grotte d'Antiparos', p. 253) is consistent with her effort to create a fearless and self-disciplined narrator, a 'great traveller' who crosses over the gender divide. Her narrative persona differs from Craven's 'real' life, as glimpsed through her preface: a woman forced to separate from her husband and six children, probably after a sexual scandal, a traveller who travels not because she enjoys it ('you may think me very odd in saying a voyage is a bitter draught to me – you will be much more surprised when I tell you I hate travelling', p. 195), but in order to improve her health. Furthermore, she claims in the preface that one of the reasons she has decided to publish these letters is to show where the *real* Lady Craven has been, since a double, 'a Birmingham coin of myself' passes the inns of Europe for 'the wife of my husband', obviously referring to her husband's mistress. Therefore, the epistolary travelogue addressed to the Margrave of Anspach, with whom she had an affair and whom she was later to marry after the death of his wife and her husband in 1791, functions for Craven as a vindication, fashioning a self who shapes and controls her environment rather than being shaped and controlled by it.

In the grotto of Antiparos Craven is shocked and angry by the acts of the Russian fleet, who 'broke off some glorious pillars' (p. 250), taking them to the museum in Petersburg, where Craven saw them during her journey to Russia. The violation of this temple of nature is 'a sacrilege', a reaction that contrasts with Craven's desire to pick up in Athens the broken marbles of the Parthenon:

> If the Empress could know how little satisfaction the curious must receive by seeing them in an imperfect and mutilated state in her Museum – and what beautiful things they must have been in the grotto – she would grieve with me, that ever a desire of obliging could induce her officers to commit what I think a sacrilege against antiquity. (p. 250)

The use of the words 'pillars' and 'antiquity', confusing nature and culture, stress Craven's paradoxical relation to Greece. The grotto is an emblem of beauty beyond history and culture, sublime and eternal in contrast to the broken pieces of the Parthenon, the relic of a bygone civilisation, now exposed to the ignorance of the Turks and the greed of the European collectors. While walking in Athens, Craven, unlike Richard Chandler who tried to reconstruct the Athens of Pericles by incorporating in his account Pausanias's descriptions of extinct monuments, constantly converts historical time into personal time, appropriating and domesticating the foreign:

> We produce effects for the pencil by the trees we plant in our parks or gardens; the Athenians could neither form landscape or shade by these – but they brought to perfection an art which gave them seats and walks, secured from the scorching rays of the sun, by their marble edifices, which were both useful and ornamental – A little orange-garden, not twenty feet square, is shewn at Athens, as a more delicious thing in these days than a new temple, a pillar consecrated, or a prise gained in the Olympic games. We make a lawn, or plant a clump – they raised an edifice. The variety of these, and the number of pillars, destined only to commemorate the most trifling events, prove that it was the natural produce of the soil; (p. 260)

In this odd comparison between Greek marbles and English landscaping, Craven follows once again the opposite direction from Montagu. Whereas Montagu lamented the overwhelming of culture by nature ('Alas! Art is extinct here. The wonders of nature alone remain'),[34] Craven conflates the surviving monuments of classical antiquity with nature, comparing them to planting a lawn or a clump. Placing emphasis on human control of the environment, she employs the concept of temporalisation not only to render an alien culture commensurable and thus intelligible[35] but also to resist the feeling of wonder in front of Greek art, the reverential and scholarly attitude exhibited in Athens by her male contemporaries.

The Turkish Baths

The change in aesthetic sensibilities and its political connotations further emerge in Craven's visit to the Turkish baths in Athens. The juxtaposition between Craven and Montagu's descriptions reveals the striking difference between the two travellers, underlining the passage from the Neoclassical to the picturesque. Montagu's famous 1717 letter**,** describing her visit to the Turkish baths at Sofia**,** not only attests to the author's entry into the space forbidden to male western travellers**,** but also initiates a discourse that informs the view and representation of oriental women. Montagu sees the women there 'in the state of Nature, that is in plain English stark naked, without any beauty or defect concealed'.[36] By alluding to mythology, Renaissance painting and literature, Montagu, influenced by Neoclassicism, appreciates (and appropriates) the Orient through an ahistorical aesthetic discourse:

> They walked and moved with the same majestic grace, which Milton describes our General Mother with. There were many amongst them, as exactly proportioned as ever any goddess

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34 Montagu, letter L, p. 148.
35 Leask, p. 49.
36 Montagu, letter XXVII, p. 59.

> was drawn, by the pencil of a Guido or Titian, and most of their skin shiningly white, only adorned by their by their beautiful hair, divided into many tresses, hanging on their shoulders, braided either with pearl or ribbon, perfectly representing the figures of the Graces.[37]

Whereas critics like Meyda Yegenoglu and Jill Campbell argue that Montagu's aesthetic discourse is an orientalising strategy, forcing oriental women into a western frame of reference, other feminist critics, like Elizabeth Bohls, counter that the traveller presents herself as an aesthetic subject (a privilege reserved for males) in order to represent the bathers as aesthetic rather than erotic objects, thus challenging not only the masculinist view of the Orient but also the monolithic notion of Orientalism.[38] The debate around Montagu's description of the bathers at Sofia reflects not only the current unease with the role of women in the imperial project, but also continuing concerns about the relation between women and aesthetic discourse, especially when that involves the representation of women from another culture. It is impossible to restrict the ambiguity and rich complexity of Montagu's letter to a single political interpretation, and as Teresa Heffernan convincingly argues, 'it would be reductive either to dismiss Lady Mary's text as irredeemably orientalist or to herald it as unquestionably feminist'.[39]

On the contrary, after visiting the baths in Athens, Craven challenges Montagu's idealised representation of oriental women while maintaining the notion of their body as a spectacle for western eyes, emphasising that she 'never saw so many fat women at once together, nor fat ones so fat as these' (p. 264). Although both women travellers are sensitive to physical detail in their description of the hammam, and both use the word 'nature' and the comparison to Eve to underline the nudity of the women, Craven abandons what Melman calls the 'moral-free aestheticism' of Montagu, adopting 'a serious tone that already anticipates that of early Victorian writers'.[40] In Craven's description the naked bodies seen at the hammam of Athens no longer recall 'the figures of the graces', but repulse the viewer by their physicality and obesity. The ambiguous 'state of nature' is no longer prelapsarian but the sign of a 'fallen' and degenerate population. Whereas Montagu stressed the women's white skin, Craven sees the Greek and Turkish women as dark and sallow, thus moving from external to internal

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37 Ibid.

38 See Bohls, Campbell, and Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

39 Teresa Heffernan, 'Feminism Against the East/West Divide: Lady Mary's Turkish Embassy Letters', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 33.2 (2000), 201-215 (p. 203).

40 Melman, p. 112.

characteristics, and suggesting the oriental female's stereotypical sensuality, vulgarity and idleness. She disputes her predecessor's vision of beautiful and graceful bodies, representing the other's body as disgusting and grotesque:

> The Consul's wife, Madame Gaspari, and I went into a room which precedes the Bath, which room is the place where the women dress and undress, fitting like tailors upon boards – there were above fifty; some having their hair washed, others dyed, or plaited; some were at the last part of their toilet, putting with a fine gold pin the black dye into their eyelids; in short, I saw here Turkish and Greek nature, through every degree of concealment, in her primitive state – for the women fitting in the inner room were absolutely so many Eves – and as they came out their flesh looked boiled – These Baths are the great amusement of women, they stay generally five hours in them; that is in the water and at their toilet together – but I think I never saw so many fat women at once together, nor fat ones so fat as these – (pp. 263-264)

Her repudiation of her predecessor aims at exposing the people she encounters as degenerate, in desperate need of a 'civilising mission'. Although, like Montagu, Craven recognises that the baths function as a public space for women, she dismisses them as a self-indulgent amusement, which destroys rather than enhances the oriental women's appearance: 'The frequent use of hot-baths destroys the solids, and these women at nineteen look older than I am at this moment' (p. 226). The hammam epitomises for Craven the sensual and effeminate Orient, a picturesque but finally disappointing and dangerous space that she controls through her writing.

The fact that her account of a Turkish bath occurs in Athens is not a coincidence, but is meant to distinguish her even more from the bathers; during her earlier visit to the Parthenon, Craven, who throughout her travelogue depicts herself riding horses, identifies with the figures of the amazons carved on the temple as well as with the Goddess Athena 'direct[ing] and overlook[ing] [the Athenians'] actions' (p. 258). The identification with female figures of power and control from Greek mythology that question the gender divide, provides a violent contrast with the indolent, self-indulgent, and even monstrous – due to their nudity – women in the baths. Craven does not enter the bath but remains at the threshold dressed and presumably sweaty and uncomfortable. Her Englishness is not only defined by her clothed rather than 'primitive' or 'natural' state, but also by the curiosity, energy, risk-taking, self-discipline and control that construct her narrative persona, the exact opposite characteristics from those associated with the bathers.

> We had very pressing solicitations to undress and bathe, but such a disgusting sight as this would have put me in an ill humour with my sex in a bath for ages – Few of these women had fair skins or fine forms – hardly any – and Madame Gaspari tells me, that the

> encomiums and flattery a fine young woman would meet with in these baths, would be astonishing – I stood some time in the door-way between the dressing-room and the Bath, which last was circular, with niches in it for the bathers to fit in; it was a very fine room with a stone dome – and the light came through small windows at the top – (p. 264)

Craven, like Montagu who also refused to undress at the baths, violates the rules of the hammam,[41] the total yet ephemeral equality offered by the naked body, nudity being the equaliser even between masters and slaves – as Montagu had already noted in her famous letter. As Georges Vigarello shows in his history of European somatic hygiene, cleanliness was not a habit among the eighteenth-century aristocracy;[42] therefore, Craven's reluctance to undress might hide more differences than nationality (and assumed superiority) and propriety. Ironically, the dressed Englishwoman, 'both dignified and ridiculous',[43] becomes the ultimate spectacle in the hammam.

Ariadne's dance

Still in pursuit of the picturesque in her visit, Craven ends her day in Athens with another spectacle:

> In the evening, the Athenian girls were invited to perform before me the ancient dance called Ariadne's dance – A more stupid performance as a dance I never saw; but I can conceive that the pantomime of it represents the despair of Ariadne, when she saw herself forsaken – A woman, that is to say she who is the most esteemed dancer, gets up, and with a handkerchief in one hand, waves it about in a languid manner; with the other she holds the hand of a second, who leads a third, and so on – they move in a string, ten, twelve, six , eight, the number is indifferent, and this female line moves in a circle, or according to the direction it shall please the girl with the handkerchief to give; her eyes are fixed on the ground, and her step is a sort of swim or sink – the music is as dull and uniform as her steps, which like her eyes, never lose the ground. (p. 264)

The description of the dance offers Craven the opportunity not only to dismiss Montagu's idealised representations of the dances she saw during her own journey, but also further to separate herself from the dancers, who in this case represent the classical rather than the oriental aspect of Greece. When Craven lands at Naxos during her voyage from Constantinople to Athens, she promptly refers to the myth of Ariadne. She also finds at Naxos another

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41 See Landry, p. 480.

42 Georges Vigarello, *Le propre et le sale: L'hygiène du corps depuis le Moyen Age* (Paris: Seuil, 1985).

43 Srinivas Aravamudan, 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the Hammam: Masquerade, Womanliness, and Levantinization', *ELH*, 62.1 (1995), 69-104 (p. 83).

example of the ugliness and degeneracy of the modern female inhabitants of the region: 'We waited near four hours to see a Naxiote maiden dressed in her holiday clothes – which are neither decent nor pretty' (p. 245). In a pattern recurrent in her travelogue, her anticipation for the picturesque scene of the Naxiote women dressed in their best costumes – a sight described and appreciated by most male travellers to the Greek islands – is soon followed by disappointment. Craven's reluctance to see the past in the present culminates with the description of Ariadne's dance, performed, as she claims, for her sake. Although the traveller recognises the tragic story of Ariadne, forsaken by Theseus at Naxos through the movements of the dance, she immediately disparages it as 'a stupid performance', criticising both music and steps as 'dull and uniform'.

Craven's sneer at the illusion of the continuity of antiquity, which had so inspired Lady Montagu, represents an attempt to construct her own myth in opposition both to the forsaken and desperate Ariadne and to the Athenian women who re-enact the ancient story. In her 'geographical intercourse with the world' (p. 133), as she calls her journey, Craven adopts an arrogant tone to smooth her way, overcoming obstacles and contradictions. However, despite her desire to reinvent herself as an intrepid traveller and thus transcend the restrictions of her gender, she engages with the everyday rather than the timeless, embodying Gillian Rose's interpretation of 'time-geography'.[44] Rose argues that studies of the private sphere have not so far accounted for 'the specifically feminine kind of subjectivity and sociality' created by the 'routine work of mothering and domesticity', concluding that the omission of the differences such routines produce is a repression of the Other. Her feminist analysis exposes time-geography's universal claims as masculinist, denying the specificity of space and of the body, 'the possibility of different spaces being known by other subjects'.[45] In Craven's description of Athens, neither the space nor the bodies moving through it are transparent and abstract. Her encounters with local women, especially in the hammam where bodies are definitely gendered, coloured, and sexual, show how spatial definitions and differentiations express and constitute unequal social

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[44] Time-geography is related to structurationism, a merging of geography, history and daily life, which addresses the social question of agency and structure. Gillian Rose, in *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993), p. 22, explains that time-geography images the 'paths' humans take as they fulfill their daily activities, interpreted in terms of the constraints in their mobility when faced with 'particular institutional projects occurring at specific temporal and social locations'. Yet, Rose criticises time-geography for privileging a social-scientific masculinist space, viewed primarily as being disembodied, individualistic, and public.

[45] Rose, pp. 26-27, 40.

relations.[46] Instead of mapping and surveying Greece (especially its antiquities which were the main goal of the male travellers), Craven traces the domestic and trivial everyday events in her sojourn in Athens. Rose adds that the belief that everything is knowable and mappable is a patriarchal concept; a feminist concept of geography aims at reinserting a physical dimension into the discourse and creating a less tangible vision of the world,[47] evidenced here by Craven's references to the little finger or toe of the statue, to the hammam, to a old woman's ailment, to a child held in her arms – a final image from Athens which betrays the writer's repressed emotions, her sadness at being forever separated from her children.

Craven's use of the picturesque in her account of her Greek journey reveals her mixed feelings about Greece. Coloured by a pervasive imperial attitude, her letters suggest the ideological construction of Greece by Europe, at a time when it was still colonised by the Ottoman Empire. However, by combining the visit to the Parthenon with a tour of the hammam, Craven's impressions, like Montagu's regrets, emphasise the ambiguity of Greece as a divided place that challenges the binary opposition between Europe and Orient.

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[46] For Rose, this is feminist geography's challenge to the masculinist sense of a singular space (p. 113).

[47] See Rose chapter 7.

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Vassiliki Markidou

Travels Off-centre: Lady Hester Stanhope in Greece

Abstract

The essay examines Lady Hester Stanhope's travelogue and analyses the ways in which the intersection of gender, travel and empire shaped her identity. It also outlines the complexity of the textual politics of the *Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope* (1846) by focusing on the text's double authorial voice – the representation of Stanhope by her physician, Dr. Meryon, and her own letters to particular individuals that intersect it. Along with this effect of authorial indeterminacy, *The Travels* fuse male and female voices as Meryon describes the Orient through his fictionalisation of Stanhope, while at the same time the reader perceives her through him and his narrative. Meryon's also commodifies both Stanhope and contemporary Greece in order to meet domestic market demands. Stanhope's journey to Greece – poised between East and West, classical glory and modern decay- informs, and mirrors, her own liminal position between masculinity and femininity, tradition and cosmopolitanism, (racial, national, and class) centrality, and (gender and textual) eccentricity. Thus, Stanhope's identity becomes a fusion of contradictory voices, amidst which the reader can witness her challenge and reinforcement of the established image of the British Empire as a male space.

According to *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope (1776-1839) was 'the eldest daughter of Charles, viscount Mahon (afterwards third Earl Stanhope), by his first wife, Hester, the clever sister of William Pitt the elder and elder daughter of the great Earl of Chatham'.[1] Stanhope's father and uncle shaped to a considerable extent her gender, cultural, and political identity. The former was an eccentric: though a member of the aristocracy, he held stern republican beliefs, embraced Jacobinism and promoted the French Revolution. To that end, he removed the Stanhope coat-of-arms from the gates of Chevening, Kent, which he renamed 'Democracy Hall' and even renamed himself 'Citizen Stanhope'. On the other hand, William Pitt the elder, Chancellor of the Exchequer and later Prime Minister, was strongly linked to British colonialism, since, apart from his political service, much of the family fortune had been made in India by 'Diamond' Pitt, Lady Hester's great-great grandfather. If we take into consideration that during his second service as the British Prime Minister, Hester Stanhope lived with him and served him as 'his hostess, confidante and informal adviser', one cannot fail to appreciate his considerable impact

[1] *The Dictionary of National Biography. From the Earliest Times to 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 899.

on his niece.[2] Clearly, Stanhope found herself at an early stage of her life situated between eccentricity and tradition, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, subversion and reinforcement of the British *status quo*. Such an influence would, naturally, play a crucial role in the formation of her mature self and is indeed reflected in her travels to the East.

The lure of travelling abroad had affected her very early in life. As she reported to her physician and biographer, Dr. Charles Meryon:

> Just before the French Revolution broke out, the ambassador from Paris to the English Court was the Comte d'Adhemar. That nobleman had some influence on my fate as far as regarded my wish to go abroad, which, however, I was not able to gratify until many years afterwards. I was but seven or eight years old when I saw him; and, when he came by invitation to pay a visit to my papa at Chevening, there was such a fuss with the fine footmen with feathers in their hats, and the count's boys and French manners, and I know not what, that, a short time afterwards, when I was sent to Hastings with the governess and my sisters, nothing would satisfy me but I must go and see what sort of a place France was. So I got into a boat one day unobserved, that was floating close to the beach, let loose the rope myself, and off I went. Yes, doctor, I literally pushed a boat off, and meant to go, as I thought, to France. Did you ever hear of such a mad scheme? [3]

This early attempt to escape from the confines of the familial and societal environment was a harbinger of her flight from England to the remote lands of Turkey and Syria, where she died in 1839. Although initially Stanhope had a strong desire to visit France, due to the danger of the Napoleonic wars she was forced to alter her travel plans and redirect them to the East. One of the first stops in her oriental itinerary was that of the Ottoman Empire, including the Greek lands. Given the idiosyncratic position of Greece as a liminal land (poised, as it is, between West and East) it marked this British female traveller's transition from the Occident to the Orient and consequently played a crucial role in the development of her gender, cultural and political identity.

Interestingly, these are tensions that are reflected in the construction and address of the text itself; the question may be raised of who really speaks within the *Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope*. Early on, the reader realises that the text consists of Dr. Charles Meryon's own representation of Stanhope, intersected by the latter's occasional voice through her letters (cited by the former).[4] Meryon's incorporation of Stanhope's private correspondence in

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2 Virginia Childs, *Lady Hester Stanhope: Queen of the Dessert* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990), p. 24.

3 John Watney, *Travels in Araby of Lady Hester Stanhope* (London: Gordon Cremonesi, 1975), p. 18.

4 Letters exchanged between Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope and her family can be traced at Maidstone County Records Office, between herself and Thomas Coutts at Coutts Bank, The Strand, London, while others are kept at the Victoria and Albert Special Collections Department.

The Travels forces the reader to oscillate between the former's authoritative masculine voice controlling the public document (*The Travels*) and the latter's feminine voice registered in her private documents (her letters to particular individuals). At the same time, the reader must negotiate between Stanhope's double voice of complicity and resistance to the central authorial force of the narrative; for, as it will be argued, she both defies and conforms to Meryon's authority.

By weaving together the genres of biography and private correspondence, the text of *The Travels* disrupts the notion of a unitary author and establishes an authorial indeterminacy. It is also a text that testifies to the complex relationship between male biographer and female subject; one has to consider, for example, the gap between the past of Stanhope's travels and the present of Meryon's narration. Stanhope's physician published the particular work in 1846, eight years after her death, thus leaving his reader to wonder whether it was a faithful reflection of Lady Stanhope's views on her oriental itinerary or rather Meryon's own vision of it.

This preoccupation is reinforced by the author's focus on his reading clientele, brought to the fore at the start of the travel document.[5] As he puts it in the text's preface: 'The TRAVELS now presented to the public are intended to complete the MEMOIRS of Lady Hester Stanhope; and the author trusts that the interest excited by his former work – shown by the rapid scale of an extensive first edition, and the demand for a second – will be manifested equally for this'.[6] Meryon establishes a firm thematic link between his former work and the present one in order to ensure the latter's success within the nineteenth-century English market, betraying his insecurity over the outcome of his new endeavour.

An awareness of the author's striking commodification of Lady Stanhope within the particular paratextual element of the *Travels* in order to promote his marketing interests allows the reader to grasp the irony of his following declaration in the same preface:

> Among a host of critics, the Memoirs have been pronounced by some of another class as devoid of artistic excellence. The author's total abnegation of self, and his steady adherence to the rule he had laid down of shadowing the background he stood, in order to throw greater light on the more prominent figure in the front, seems to have availed him nothing! […] But it was not the author's purpose to divert attention from the heroine of his story; and in all the

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5 In the eighteenth century, the reading audience expanded dramatically and began to include upper class women and well-to-do men and women of the growing middle class. In the nineteenth century, it grew even more, yet a significant percentage of the contemporary English reading *clientele* of travel reports was male as well as trade-oriented.

6 Charles Lewis Meryon, ed., *Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope; forming the completion of her memoirs. Narrated by her physician*, 3 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), Preface, p. v. References to this text will henceforth be given in brackets after the respective quotations.

> adventures which the reader may peruse in the following pages, he wishes his own share in them to be lost sight of, excepting where his presence is necessary for making the description complete. (Preface, pp. ix-xi)

Here, the male author/biographer declares his conscious self-effacement in order to shed light on his female protagonist. In other words, he promises that *The Travels* will be exclusively focalised through Stanhope, thus leading the reader to expect that she will be granted power and knowledge. Instead, as it will be shown later, the bulk of the information transmitted to the reader takes place through the filter of the author's perceptions (rather than Stanhope's) and she is turned into an object to be read by the extradiegetic audience. In fact, a close look at the text's title sheds more light on Meryon's pretensions. Initially, one may argue that Meryon's choice of omitting his name from the title of *The Travels* – its only reference to its author is 'narrated by her physician' – is a proof of his desire to efface himself and bring his subject-employer to the foreground. Yet, a different reason may lie behind this apparent self-abnegation: Meryon derives his identity and authority from his role as a physician. His healing capacities empower him over Stanhope, thus allowing him to make amends for his social inferiority in relation to the female aristocrat. This is precisely the reason for which he repeatedly mentions his profession within the travel document ('in my capacity as physician', his 'professional visits') and takes pride in being the means of Stanhope's acquaintance with oriental notables. Thus, whilst in Brusa (close to Constantinople), his tending the Governor's son, who was seriously ill 'led to an acquaintance between the Governor's wife and Lady Hester' (I, 81). In fact, the significance of medical power is acknowledged by Stanhope herself in one of her letters cited in *The Travels*. Recovering from a high fever, she informs a friend of her Rhodes shipwreck and laments the loss of almost everything in her possession. However, 'the great loss of all is the medicine-chest, which saved the lives of so many travellers in Greece. How to repair it, I know not' (I, 106).

Clearly then, Meryon, far from placing himself at the background of the travel document in order to shed light on his aristocratic employer, he capitalises on his professional power over Stanhope and manipulates her image so as to serve his best interests. Another striking evidence of the latter fact can be discerned in his attempt to promote his new work by advertising its uniqueness among examples of the genre:

> A distinct line may at once be drawn between this and other books of peregrinations in the East. The reader will here find no antiquarian research, no new views of the political relations of sects and parties: but these Travels exhibit what others do not – a heroine who marches at the head of Arab tribes through the Syrian desert; who calls governors of cities to her aid, whilst she excavates the earth in search of hidden treasures; who sends generals with

> their troops to carry fire and sword into the fearful passes of a mountainous country, to avenge the death of a murdered traveller; and who then goes, defenceless and unprotected, a sojourner amidst the people on whom these chastisements had fallen. (Preface, p. vi)

The Travels of Lady Stanhope differs from contemporary European travel reports of the Orient since it does not focus on antiquarian information or political analysis. Instead, the text presents a literally ex-centric female traveller who is perfectly capable of exciting the European Romantic imagination through her – typically masculine – heroic deeds, while simultaneously exhibiting stock feminine qualities ('defenceless and unprotected').

Meryon's manipulation of Stanhope's image – evident in his investing the famous aristocrat with an alluring androgynous image – is equally discernible in his identification and exploitation of her familial and social status. Stanhope's uncle and grandfather are invoked to affirm her social qualifications; she is associated first with her famous uncle, the British Prime Minister, while her intellectual superiority is foreground as a trait which is inextricably linked to another emblematic patriarch, her predecessor, Lord Chatham. In Meryon's words: 'This work [...] fills up an interval so important, as connecting her residence with Mr. Pitt and the occurrences which marked the last fifteen years of her existence; [...] whist the undoubted marks of a superior mind, which every now and then, show themselves, will bring into evidence the talents and energy which she inherited from her ancestor, the great Lord Chatham' (Preface, pp. vi-vii). Stanhope thus becomes right from the outset of the text a highly marketable object, finely constructed rather than reflected by her male re-presenter.

The predominantly masculine, market-oriented character of the *Travels* is revealed in the narration of Stanhope's trip to Greece. The first description of the Greek isle of Zante is telling:

> It is here that the currants grow which are in request in England. It was the vintage time at our arrival, and I saw the process of drying them. They are exclusively the production of this island, with the exception of those grown in the Morea. Currants, with dried olives and olive oil, are the staple commodities of Zante. The fertility of this happy spot seemed inexhaustible, if a judgement might be formed from the cheapness of its productions. (I, 24)

The description of Zante is a distinctly mercantile one; the author refers to currants, the stock commodity that England imported from the Greek island since the founding of the Levant Company, whilst also producing an elaborate description of their preparation. Although this choice may stem from the narrator's need to reassure his audience as to the veracity of his account and promote himself as an acute, thorough traveller/narrator, at the

same time, such an account would interest a considerable part of his readership.

The Greek female sex undergoes a similar treatment by the author of *The Travels*. Meryon depicts the women of Zante in the following way:

> Of the native Zanteots such as I saw may be described in a few words. The women paint their faces excessively, particularly with white round the mouth: they take great pride in long hair, and make the greatest possible display of it. Among the higher classes, the unmarried females are kept much shut up in rooms with blinds to the windows, and are often betrothed without being seen by their future husbands. Among the lower and middle orders there must be a greater freedom of conduct, since many young creatures of considerable beauty were pointed out to me as having attached themselves to English officers without the sanction of the Church; whilst assassination, which formerly followed almost inevitably an illicit connection, if discovered, from the hand of some of the relatives of the female, was now rarely heard of. (I, 25)

Meryon's description echoes the stock male European accounts of oriental women, a commonplace of male travellers to the Orient since the sixteenth century. It portrays local women as being highly embellished, theatrical, vain, beautiful, and prone to licentiousness and miscegenation, evils from which only a high social status can save them – since that would entail female seclusion. The supposed laxity of Greek moral standards is exacerbated in this account by the lack of male revenge on couples that defy the social institution of marriage and commit the heinous crime of miscegenation.

As the journey within Greece proceeds, a typical European representation of a Greek city is presented to the reader; this is Meryon's description of Patras, a port in the northern Peloponnese:

> The houses, build of mud, are despicable without and comfortless within. Here and there I observed a mosque. Melancholy indeed was the change from the fine streets of La Valetta to the mud habitations of Patras! Still I felt that I was in Greece, and the language and appearance of the inhabitants had something magical in it. My bosom beat with emotion as I now trod, for the first time, the soil of a people, in studying whose language and habits the chief part of fifteen years of my early life had been – I still think wisely – expended. Mr. B. and myself, having some leisure here, resolved to try the hot bath [...] a *hamam* for the first time. (I, 27)

Patras is initially portrayed as being full of dirt and mud, standing in strong contrast to the clean, inviting streets of La Valletta. The Greek town fallen to the Turks is juxtaposed to the multiethnic, multicultural, cosmopolitan Maltese capital. Indeed, the move from Malta to Ottoman Greece marked Lady Stanhope's and her company's transition from Europe and all that it signified to the *terra incognita* of the Orient. Right at the point of this transition stood early nineteenth-century Greece, which the English, among

many European nations, continued to invest with a highly contradictory image: it signified both the classical glory and the contemporary corruption and fall to the infidels. As Efterpi Mitsi has argued, in order for the Europeans, 'to encounter and claim the past (the reputed origin of Western civilization), the present [had to be] [...] seen as alien, primitive, and degenerate'.[7] Indeed, the oscillation between oriental and classical Greece seems to take place incessantly within Meryon's kaleidoscopic representation of the particular Greek town. Nineteenth-century Patras with its mosques, *hamams*, mud and dirt co-exists with 'the ancient Patra' and its language and customs, in other words, with the classical Greek education that the author takes pride in having acquired. The overlap between abhorrent East and glorious West is completed in the following sentence: 'Still I felt I was in Greece, and the language and appearance of the inhabitants had something magical in it.' The author intends to promote the glory of classical Greece, still present amidst the deplorable present, but at the same time, he evokes the magic and charms with which both the Ottomans and their Greek subjects were associated in the English imagination.

Patras's Janus-faced representation is reproduced in the author's view of Corinth:

> Corinth was a miserable town, and has not much to interest the traveller in actual remains of edifices, although its desolate and altered state appeals very forcibly to his recollections. A fragment only of one Doric temple remains, affording no specimen of that order of architecture which derives its name from the city. One might question the existence even of a city of such celebrity, if there were not here and there some traces and fragments of buildings, which just satisfy doubt but not curiosity. Corinth is surrounded by marshes, which render it most unwholesome; and the plague was said to depopulate it frequently. (I, 27)

In Meryon's account, Corinth is a typically oriental 'desolate', and 'unwholesome' city, and prey to the plague, whose frequency may also suggest bouts of immorality and sin. Yet, a few ancient remains bear the proof of its glorious past. Such reminders are typical of early nineteenth-century European travel reports on Greece. Fittingly enough, in his lamentation of the Greek past, Meryon reinforces the stock image of the Romantic traveller, yearning for classical ruins. The author's representation of both Patras and Corinth oscillates between fantasy and reality, Western intellect and oriental bestiality, the idealised image of ancient Greek glory and the despicable fall to the infidel. As Meryon recalls: '[w]hile musing on the goodly aspect around me, on temples and demi-gods, on the Parthenon

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[7] Efterpi Mitsi, '"Roving Englishwomen": Greece in Women's Travel Writing', *Mosaic*, 35 (2002), 129-44 (p. 130).

and Socrates, the cool Ilyssus and the shades of Academus, my reflections were interrupted by the loud smack of a whip, applied by Aly the Tartar to the back of a poor Greek, accompanied by a louder oath, which at once dissipated my vision, and brought me back to the reality of things around me' (I, 37).

This fraught view of Greece is also evident in the author's account of Piraeus, the once formidable Greek port: '[t]he country immediately adjoining the port seemed bare and without verdure. Some remains of the quays, which once bordered the Piraeus, lay scattered at the water's edge, and a few ill-constructed boats, made fast by rush hawsers, showed how low the navy of Athens had declined' (I, 37). Nineteenth-century Piraeus stood in sharp contrast to the unprecedented power of the contemporary major British ports, such as London, Southampton, or Bristol. For Meryon, and undoubtedly his target audience, the British were the true inheritors of the imperial Greek past and had become the new naval and colonial masters of the West. Renaissance England's aspiration to become a military and colonial power of equal, if not greater, magnitude to ancient Greece was becoming true three centuries later.[8]

In *The Travels*, the imperialist gaze is clearly a male one. Lady Hester Stanhope functions as the pretext for Meryon to articulate his viewpoint of Greece and its inhabitants. Yet, at certain points in the travel account, Stanhope's uneasy relationship to the masculinist/imperialist agenda can be discerned within Meryon's authorial frame. To give an example, whilst still in Corinth, Meryon paid a visit to the son of the town's *bey* (governor), who received him cordially and allowed him to view his lodgings. In return, his father sent his harem to visit Lady Hester Stanhope. In Meryon's words:

> The bey himself, an elderly man, sent his harym, consisting of his wife and about a dozen young females, her slaves, to visit Lady Hester. Lord Sligo, Mr. B., and myself, were sitting with her ladyship at the time; but it was intimated to us by the interpreter, that women could not enter whilst men were present. On an occasion so tempting, none but the over-fastidious will blame us for resolving to hide ourselves in an adjoining room, and obtain, through the crevices of the wainscot, a sight of these beauties of Corinth: for we naturally supposed that a man would have selected only beautiful females as the companions of his leisure hours. As soon as we had retired, the ladies were introduced, and by the engaging manner with which Lady Hester welcomed them, they became in a few moments quite familiar with her. They

[8] It is this aspiration that is reflected, for example, in Richard Hakluyt's seminal work, *Principall Navigations*, 3 vols (London, 1598-1600; 1st edn: 1582; 2nd edn. 1589), a travel compendium that promoted the Renaissance English expansionist agenda in relation to the West. Indeed, by dedicating the work to his main sponsor, Sir Francis Walsingham, Hakluyt painted him as a man who took 'a speciall care of […] the advancing of navigation, the very walles of this our Island, as the oracle is reported to have spoken of the sea forces of Athens' (Hakluyt, I, xxii).

> unveiled their faces, threw off their ferigees, and placed themselves on the sofa, in attitudes apparently negligent, although of studied grace, as best fitting to display their figures, their jewels, and the long tresses that contrasted with the dazzling clearness (for I will not say whiteness) of their complexions. The conversation was carried on by signs and gestures; and, naturally inquisitive as females in all countries are on matters of dress, they began to examine Lady Hester's, and to compare it with their own. Unconscious that the eyes of men were watching them, their naked feet, and sometimes their bosoms, *βαθύκολπαι*, from the nature of a Turkish dress, were exposed. At length we relieved Lady Hester from the unpleasant situation in which she found herself unintentionally placed, both on our part and hers, by a half smothered laugh, which acted like an electric shock on the Moslem ladies; for, resuming their veils and ferigees in dismay, they suppressed their gaiety at once, [...] [T]hey very soon afterwards went away, and no doubt agreed that it would be best to hush up their suspicions, lest the bey's jealousy might be excited to their own detriment. (I, 30-31)

This incident centres on the tension between the female and the male traveller's experience of the *harem*: the former is characterised by 'participant observation' while the latter, by the objectification and eroticisation of the oriental female.[9] Thus, whilst in the all-female context of the event, occidental and oriental women conduct a cross-cultural 'dialogue', even without the aid of a common linguistic code, and exchange positions of subject (viewing) and object (viewed), the enveloping patriarchal group objectifies both. Stanhope's experience is here used as a cipher for the author's representation of a feminised Orient. The account displays the typical male dismemberment of the female body ('naked feet', 'bosoms'). It includes clear-cut examples of orientalist discourse ('the dazzling clearness (for I will not say whiteness) of their complexions'), and displays the hold of the male authority on the event through its use of ancient Greek, a traditional prerogative of the male sex ('*βαθύκολπαι*'). The author's effort to control Stanhope's encounter with the 'other' is reflected in his comment on the effect of the oriental women's awareness of being secretly viewed by male foreigners; according to Meryon, the men's laughter made them instantly leave the room, thus enabling Lady Hester Stanhope to set herself free from the uneasy situation in which she had been placed. Nevertheless, Stanhope's eagerness to communicate with the Corinthian women ('by the engaging manner with which Lady Hester welcomed them') exposes his mediation,

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[9] In *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918* (London: Macmillan, 1992), Billie Melman argues: 'As observers, women became engaged in the phenomena, or people, they described; they took part in the ordinary activities of Muslim women and in the rituals observed in harems. This kind of participant observation, as part of an intersubjective process, distinguishes harem literature from the more general discussion in Europe, on the exotic' (p. 62).

which makes her complicit with 'the male paradigm' of 'the encounter with alterity'.[10]

Lady Stanhope is both contained and exposed in Meryon's account. In his writing, she appears torn between challenging and reinforcing masculinist/imperialist codes. On May 1810, in Malta, on the trip she took before her visit to Greece, Lady Stanhope had met Michael Bruce and soon became his mistress. The scandal was twofold: not only did she have an erotic relationship outside the confines of marriage but her lover was a much younger man. Moreover, not only was she not trying to conceal this relationship, she was openly displaying it. On June 1st, accompanied by her lover and her physician, she took lodgings in a palace situated in the village of St. Antonio, five miles away from the Maltese capital. In a letter he sent to his sister on June 15, 1810, Meryon referred to this event, described the palace and reported that Lady Hester was 'not hesitating to fix in a large chateau, herself a single lady, with two single men [Bruce, her lover, and Meryon himself]'.[11]

She also developed the idea of entering the stock male arena of political espionage. On June 10, 1810, Meryon wrote a letter home in which he referred to the fact that Lady Hester had expressed her desire to become a double agent:

> You must have heard Lady Hester talk as I have done to believe that she can entertain any such project as what I am going to mention. She intends at Constantinople, to make friends with the French ambassador, and through this means to obtain a passport to travel through France. Protected by this, she will set off from Turkey, proceed through Hungary, Germany, and arrive at Paris. When there, she means to get into Buonaparte's good graces, study his character, and then sail for England to plot schemes for the subversion of his plans.[12]

Along similar lines, following a shipwreck with a Greek boat and crew near Rhodes, she and her company found refuge on the isle of Rhodes, where she committed a deeply transgressive act that would become her trademark: she donned Turkish male attire. By doing so, Stanhope forged two disruptions: she questioned the clear-cut distinctions between the sexes and violated the boundaries between Occident and Orient. Her use of oriental male dress was at the same time a strong political statement, since, as Gayle V. Fisher argues, '[t]he language of dress in the nineteenth century made "men's pants" into charged, even sexualised words'.[13] Such a statement was consistent with

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10 Lidia Curti, *Female Stories, Female Bodies: Narrative, Identity and Representation* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 154.

11 Watney, p. 111.

12 Watney, p. 116.

13 Gayle V. Fischer, '"Pantalets" and "Turkish Trowsers": Designing Freedom in the mid-Nineteenth-Century United States', *Feminist Studies*, 23 (1997), 110-40 (p. 116).

her scandalous erotic relationship (with Michael Bruce). At the same time, by rejecting the European dress and acquiring the Eastern one instead, she challenged stock imperialist attitudes, just as she would do later on by 'going native' in Syria.

Meryon's delineation of this rebelliousness is worth examining in some detail:

> It will be thought by many persons, that Lady Hester Stanhope violated too far the regard due to her sex in the resolution she now adopted of equipping herself as a man, and as a Turk. But let it be recollected that she had lost everything in the shipwreck, and that even the cities of the Levant, had she been in one, had neither milliners nor mantua-makers, who understand how to make European female dresses, nor materials for them, could she have made them herself. The impossibility of getting what she wanted was therefore so evident, that she unavoidably made choice of the Turkish costume, in which the long robes, the turban, the yellow slippers, and pelisses, have really nothing incompatible with female attire. (I, 110)

Meryon tries hard to justify Stanhope's violation of a double Western taboo: a female making use of masculine, as well as, Eastern attire. Having acknowledged this twin transgression (an acknowledgement which perhaps reflects the stock values and beliefs of his readership), the writer proceeds with a lengthy excuse so as to persuade the reader that she was left with no other choice than to commit the crime. He recounts that 'she had lost everything in the shipwreck', there were no milliners and mantua-makers to make her a European dress, and even if she could have made one herself, there were no appropriate materials. Having listed these justifications, Meryon drives home 'the impossibility' of such a mission and declares the 'unavoidability' of Stanhope's deeply transgressive choice, while noting that it was fully compatible with female attire. Ironically enough, it is precisely this exaggerated effort which highlights his deep unease with Stanhope's violation. Furthermore, he is aware that this cross-dressing will be highly titillating to his readers and will consequently promote book sales. Unlike her coy defender, the transgressor herself was quite clear on what had motivated her particular course of action. In a letter she wrote to a European friend during her short stay in Rhodes (following the above-mentioned shipwreck), she noted: '[w]e all mean to dress in future as Turks. I can assure you that if I ever looked well in anything, it is in the Asiatic dress, quite different from the European Turks' (I, 109). Her adoption of male Turkish attire may thus have been dictated not by necessity but by an awareness of herself as not fitting in European female attire and its cultural and gender connotations.

Stanhope attempted to fashion a new female self by employing conceptions of femininity that deviated from the stock gender and cultural norms. These conceptions were interestingly constructed by borrowing from

masculinity; forging illicit erotic relationships, becoming a spy and wearing male clothes were traditional masculine exploits – though one needs to note that Turkish male attire, and oriental men in general, were labelled effeminate by Westerners. Her borrowing from masculinity is consistent with her pattern of relationships with the sexes: she preferred the company of men and had a distinct disliking for women. John Cam Hobhouse, Byron's friend, visited Malta on July 27, 1810, and met Stanhope. He noted that she was 'a masculine woman, who says she would as soon live with packhorses as with women', while she also 'liked to argue like a man, and only showed feminine tenderness when she was with someone she loved. Her dislike for the company of women bordered sometimes on the paranoic'.[14]

At the same time, however, Stanhope eschewed the stock Romantic European male sensibility, yearning to discover classical treasures. Thus, while in her travels to the Greek lands she socialised with Lord Sligo, who was preoccupied with excavating and buying ancient Greek treasures to fill 'his cabinet at Westport Place, in Ireland' (I, 41) and Lord Byron, who had engaged in 'swimming across the Hellespont, from Sestos to Abydos, in imitation of Leander' (I, 36), Stanhope was uninterested in appropriating the Greek past in any possible way. Instead, she desired to move on to what she considered 'the real East', namely Constantinople and Damascus. Her only interest in Greece pertained to its people and their customs as well as to its vegetation; like an amateur botanist, she gathered 'violets, orange-flowers, and almost every sort of fruit' (I, 106). To borrow Susan Bassnett's term, this 'alternative mapping' of the Greek lands, which consists of 'tracing patterns from the most banal and trivial things' (as opposed to the male desire to 'circumscribe, define, and hence control the world') may be read as a reflection of Stanhope's struggle to 'create a completely different set of identifiable structures outside patriarchal control'.[15]

Nevertheless, in all of her travels both to the Greek lands and elsewhere, and until the time of her permanent residence in Syria, Stanhope displayed what Hsu-Ming Teo calls '[a] fundamentally conservative nature of this new, modern femininity, in which "emancipation" relied merely on the bold actions of the individual rather than on collective action for structural change'.[16] She was interested in becoming the exception to the rule – the eccentric, ex-centric female traveller –, thus ultimately reinforcing patriarchal

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[14] Watney, p. 114.

[15] Susan Bassnett, 'Travel Writing and Gender', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 225-41 (p. 230).

[16] Hsu-Ming Teo, 'Women's Travel, Dance, and British Metropolitan Anxieties, 1830-1939', *Gender & History*, 12 (2000), 366-400 (p. 379).

norms. After all, whilst in Britain, despite her aristocratic origins, she was just another woman, in the East, her difference from other women was dramatically accentuated.

Her desire to be 'alone of her sex' is highlighted in a grandiose plan, which she had disclosed to her physician on January 12, 1815, just prior to their trip from Tripoli to Mar Elias where she had decided to reside. Meryon states that

> One day (January 12) Lady Hester spoke to me of a plan, which she had been turning over in her mind, of forming an association of literary *men* and artists, whom she proposed inviting from Europe, for the purpose of prosecuting discoveries in every branch of knowledge, and of journeying over different parts of the Ottoman empire. In fact, she aimed at creating another Institute, like that which Buonaparte led with him to Egypt, and of which she was to be the head. (III, 61-62; emphasis added).

Instead of longing to form either a mixed or an all-female 'academy' so as to promote both the development of arts and sciences and women's active engagement in the male-dominated intellectual sphere, Stanhope envisioned herself as the head of an all-male community, thus revealing her conservative stance towards the issue of collective female emancipation. Even her scandalous love affair with Michael Bruce can be viewed in a quite different light from that of a desire to subvert stock gender roles. One simply needs to take into consideration the fact that Bruce was highly linked to imperialism through his familial and social bonds; his father, Craufurd Bruce, was a member of the East India Company. In addition, both father and son aspired to Michael's entrance in the British Parliament and saw his travels as an initiation rite to this goal, thus reinforcing the Grand Tour *topos* and its social and political connotations.

Stanhope's complicity is reflected in her sharing of Meryon's orientalist discourse. In the latter's description of their travel from Athens to Zea on a Greek boat, Stanhope and her company were appalled by the behaviour of the Greek members of the crew:

> The servants, from some trifling cause, had quarrelled with the crew; and matters had become so serious, that we slept on our arms, we being only sixteen in number, and they twenty. There are no bounds to the restlessness and cupidity of Greeks. In the present instance, whilst, on the one hand, the crew were cheating and robbing the servants, the captain, on the other, was scheming and contriving how he could obtain more passengers, in spite of the agreement he had made with us. (I, 44-45)

Once again, colonialist and racist attitudes can be discerned in the author's discourse: the Greeks are portrayed as treacherous rascals, and the implication is that they deserve the Ottoman yoke. Moreover, they are highly superstitious, displaying their narrow-mindedness and degradation. As the

group advances to the Marmara Sea, they find themselves in danger of a shipwreck, a fact which drives the Greek men on boat to behave in what is described as a weak, effeminate manner and earns them the contempt of their superior British clients, evident in their disembarking:

> As the wind increased, the utmost noise and confusion prevailed among the crew. Instead of doing their duty, they set about collecting money from us, which they tied in a handkerchief, and fastened to the tiller, making a vow to St. George that they would dedicate it to his shrine if we reached some port in safety [...]. We reached it in safety; but the specimen we had had of the incapacity of the captain and his crew induced Lady Hester to disembark. (I, 46-47)

The colonialist rhetoric against the fallen Greeks includes an attack on their literal as well as symbolic filthiness, which stands in contrast to the Turks' ritualistic hygiene:

> There are many things revolting to a European when he first travels in the East, and nothing more so than the filth of the natives. This, perhaps, is more manifest in the Christians than in the Turks; for the former are not compelled, as the Mahometans are, by their religion, to wash themselves frequently; and one observes in them habits of uncleanliness which are quite disgusting. Thus, our captain, besides appearing to us to be no mariner, had the itch in its worst stage; and his men daily assisted each other, on the deck in the sunshine, in keeping under the stock of vermin attached to each. They were observed never to have shifted themselves during the whole voyage; and, to protect ourselves from the results of their filthiness, we were obliged peremptorily to forbid any one coming on the quarter-deck, except to steer and haul. (I, 47)

Meryon's orientalist discourse overlaps with Stanhope's Grecophobic attitude. In a letter, Stanhope states: 'I do not know how it is, but I always feel at home with these people, [the Turks] and can get out of them just what I like; but it is a very different thing with the Greeks, who shuffle and shuffle, and you never can depend upon them for one moment' (I, 109). This convergence highlights in a dramatic way Billie Melman's point that '[w]hat is so intriguing about the feminine discourse is not its "separateness" but the dynamic interchange between it and the hegemonic orientalist culture'.[17] Stanhope's gender may have accounted for the shift of focus from the accumulation of classical ruins and knowledge of the classical past that defined the male British Romantic sensibility to a social and cultural knowledge of alterity (that included the Greek other). At the same time, her racial, national and class roots sustained her link with (male) orientalism.

The Travels of Lady Stanhope reveals a negotiation between two forces of textual transmission – a masculine and a feminine one – as well as between the confused and contradictory voices of the latter force. In other words, the

[17] Melman, p. 10.

travel document sets up a discursive struggle and interdependency between its male and female voices; for Meryon is capable of describing the Orient *through* his fictionalisation of Stanhope, while the reader can perceive her mainly through *him* and *his* narrative. Similarly to *The Travels*' rejection of a unitary authorial power, Stanhope's identity defies easy categorisation and appears as a conglomeration of conflicting voices. As it has already been demonstrated, on the one hand, she assumes the role of the female transgressor of European gender and cultural norms. On the other, she accepts the notion of British racial and cultural superiority and displays an imperialist attitude towards the downtrodden natives.

Appropriately, Stanhope's travel to early nineteenth-century Greece, poised between Europe and Asia as well as between ancient glory and modern corruption, informs, reflects and reinforces her own liminal position between masculinity and femininity, tradition and cosmopolitanism, (racial, national, and class) centrality and (gender and textual) eccentricity. Stanhope oscillates between challenging and reinforcing the masculinist/imperialist discourse or between disrupting and acknowledging the established image of the British Empire as a male space. Just like her remains, which 'travelled' many a time before being finally laid to rest,[18] Stanhope may have failed to achieve a unified self but her story, the story of her travels, dramatises the internal contradictions of the early nineteenth-century British traveller.

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[18] Stanhope died on 23 June 1839. Niven Moore, the British consul at Beirut, accompanied by William McClure Thomson, the American missionary, arrived at her place just after her death and at midnight, they carried her body to the garden and there buried it. See *The Dictionary of National Bibliography*, XVIII, 901. Melman refers to Stanhope's un- and re-burial as follows: 'Sometime during the first week of February 1989, a strange burial took place in the small British cemetery at Abey near Beirut. There was no body, since the time of death was June 1839. And what the years had left had been ravaged by treasure-hunters and grave-robbers. So that the remains of what had been Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope […] now barely filled a despatch-box. Her skull and assorted bones, exhumed early in 1988, then offered to sale to a few uninterested British officials, then recovered by the Red-Cross, were finally laid to rest' (p. 1).

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Evgenia Sifaki

A Gendered Vision of Greekness: Lady Morgan's *Woman: Or Ida of Athens*[*]

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to understand Lady Morgan's contribution to an early nineteenth-century European configuration of Greece and Greekness. Morgan's intervention is particularly interesting, as it is permeated by a complex of desires engendered by her unique position as both feminist and Irish nationalist: As its title indicates, the question of a Greek cultural identity in this novel is subsumed by a concern with gender. An examination of the novel's sources and intertextual relationships (*Woman* is firmly grounded on the refracted language of non-fictional travel accounts of Greece, by famous French and English travel writers) raises questions about this novel's project, which is both awkward and fascinating, in that it appropriates and re-contextualises concepts of Greece, the Orient, and femininity that have been fashioned and developed in mainstream male texts, in order to produce an alternative discourse, one that may promote the emancipation of women and subjugated nations.

A national tale with a difference

The pioneering professional Irish writer Lady Morgan (1776-1859), who published under the name 'Sydney Owenson', was one of the first women to develop a narrative voice that combines gender and political, especially nationalist, concerns, while being curiously both 'feminine' and feminist; Morgan constantly opposed the doctrine of the separate spheres and the deliberately political nature of her writing is always noted by her readers.[1] She published seventy volumes, including poetry, novels, travel books to France and Italy, sketches, articles, pamphlets, a comic opera, a biography and a women's history. She developed the so called 'national tale', a

[*] I would like to thank Aikaterini Douka-Kabitoglou for having first directed my attention to Lady Morgan.

[1] Dale Spender, for example, argues that 'at a time when women were discouraged, even precluded from political participation, she extended the boundaries as far as she could with her insistence that it was feasible to use fiction for social and political comment and criticism', while Katie Trumpener does not hesitate to call her work 'Jacobin-feminist' and also points to the interesting confluences of nationalist and feminist concerns throughout her work'. See Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora, 1986), pp. 310-11 and Katie Trumpener, 'National Character, Nationalist Plots: National Tale and Historical Novel in the Age of *Waverley*, 1806-1839', *ELH*, 60 (1993), 685-731 (p. 720).

novelistic type whose position in literary history has been recently thoroughly re-appraised: The 'national tale' was 'developed in Ireland, primarily by women writers […] who from the beginning address the major issues of cultural distinctiveness, national policy and political separatism' with the 'ambition not only to reflect but to direct national sentiment […]. They were both widely influential in their own right and of formative importance for the "central" canonical novelistic tradition of the nineteenth century'.[2] *Woman: Or Ida of Athens* (1809), a novel in four volumes, takes on the basic generic conventions of the national tale in that it combines a fictional travel narrative with a basic romance plot structure, includes extensive, informative descriptions of place and concentrates on the portrayal of national character. Its Greek setting, however, disturbs and complicates the much more clearly drawn contrast of centre and periphery that structures the national tale proper, which is typically a story of an Englishman's enlightening encounter with a British colony and its people. The setting of *Woman* is mostly a bizarre combination of, on the one hand, supposedly contemporary Athens, reconstructed from popular travel and art history books and, on the other, a fantastic projection of an ideal land and people.

In the long Preface to *Woman*, Morgan explains her dual and surely ambitious intention, 'to delineate the character of woman in the perfection of its natural state' and to advance the cause of the Greek national revolution against the Ottoman Empire.[3] She had not been to Greece herself (very few European women had actually visited Greece by 1809) but was determined that *Woman*, despite its being a work of fiction, would offer a detailed and reliable representation of the place and its historical situation. The purpose of this paper then is to understand Morgan's contribution to an early nineteenth-century European configuration of Greece and Greekness. And though Greekness is here understood as a cultural construct produced largely in the context of the dominant orientalising discourses of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Morgan's own intervention is particularly interesting, as it is permeated by a complex of desires engendered by her rather unique position as both woman writer and feminist, and Irish national and nationalist.[4]

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2 Trumpener, pp. 688-89. See also her *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

3 Sydney Owenson, 'Preface', *Woman: Or Ida of Athens*, Vol. I (London: Longman, 1809), ix-xxvii (p. ix).

4 For a discussion of the specificity of Morgan's textual and nationalist politics, in contrast to those of Maria Edgeworth, the more influential writer of Irish national tales at the time, see Thomas Tracy, 'The Mild Irish Girl: Domesticating the National Tale', *Éire-Ireland* 39: 1&2 (Spring/Summer 2004), pp. 81-109.

Predictably, the starting point of her argument is the association of the idea of ancient Greece with the idea of freedom. As James Sambrook puts it, 'long before Byron, Englishmen had acquired the habit of musing upon the spectacle, actual or imagined, of "fair Greece, sad relic of departed worth", the nurse of liberty prostrate beneath Turkish domination'.[5] It is hardly surprising that the Romantic nationalist Morgan would espouse the faith in the revival of the ancient Greek spirit of liberty that was associated with the Greek national uprisings against the Ottoman rule. I would argue, in fact, that just like ancient Greece had been established by then as the prototype of European civilisation, the idea of a contemporary Greek national awakening is elaborated and advanced in *Woman: Or Ida of Athens* as an example and a model for other nationalist movements in Europe, such as the Irish. As an indication of the symbolic function of the Greeks as the exemplary nation, it is worth mentioning that in her footnotes to her very successful Irish novel, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), her descriptions of traditional Irish customs, such as dress, song, dance, and so on, are often compared to those of Greece for the purpose of adding legitimacy to the cultural physiognomy of Ireland.

Given that Morgan's text is not widely available, it is worth including here a summary of its rather elaborate plot. It starts with a fictional travel narrative that structures relationships between an English aristocratic traveller transparently modelled on Byron (his name is 'Lord B…'), Greece and the indigenous, charismatic, Ida who epitomises both Greekness and the ideal woman. The Englishman, enchanted with Ida, asks her to become his mistress, but she refuses, shocked by the indecency of the proposal and the Englishman's disrespect. The second volume is largely an analepsis, a detailed account of Ida's childhood and education by her enlightened uncle and mentor, a 'philosopher of nature', whose teaching evokes the writings of the Earl of Shaftesbury, and who was, rather significantly, brought up and educated in England.[6] Also, it introduces Osmyn, her beloved. Osmyn is a Turkish slave who has discovered his true ancient Athenian origin, has become a Greek patriot and revolutionary and his heroic make-up and actions symbolise the predicament of the Greek nation. Indeed, it is the figure of Osmyn, even more than Ida herself, who is fraught with cultural ambiguity and images Greekness as an extraordinary blend of the European and the

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[5] James Sambrook, *The Eighteenth Century, The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature 1700-1789* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), p. 206.

[6] In *Woman: Or Ida of Athens* it is possible to discern elements from Shaftesbury's philosophy of nature and especially his notion of 'moral sense'. Ida appears to have a supremely developed 'moral sense' that is the basis of her subjectivity and which gives her the strength to oppose the Englishman's attempts to reduce her to a privileged object of desire. Also, Shaftesbury's concept of 'Sympathy with the Kind' can be seen as the basis of her nationalism.

Oriental. One of the most interesting questions in the novel concerns Osmyn's religious identity: his typically Turkish name implies that he is a Muslim, but we hear that he marries Ida in the end despite the fact that he does not convert to Christianity. Most of the novel chronicles their romance, that suffers a number of setbacks, the most important of which are the social prejudices of Ida's father (he cannot allow his daughter, an 'archontessa', to marry a slave) and the intervention of the Turkish Governor who lusts after Ida and is determined to possess her. Ida's father has to learn the hard way – through the horrendous sufferings inflicted on him by the betrayal of his friend, the manipulative, dishonourable and ruthless Aga – that a true patriot has to ally with his own kind, disregarding social and class differences. Ida undergoes a series of ordeals, including separations, imprisonments, escape to inhospitable London – 'a woman only truly knows how desolate it is to be a stranger',[7] we are informed – where she suffers complete destitution until she is rescued by her English-Greek uncle; she is introduced by him to London high society, which she wins over by making a show of herself as an exotic Greek princess and enchanting oriental dancer. Finally, Osmyn and Ida reunite and marry, not in Athens, where the evil Aga still reigns, but in Russia, the ally of Greece and incubator of revolutionary societies, where they are going to work together on the preparations for the national revolution.

For the purpose of understanding Morgan's construction of an idea of Greece, it is helpful to perceive in the novel two different but compatible structures. Firstly, given Ida's focal position and the allegorical make-up of the national tale, we can easily discern a tripartite structure that signals Morgan's alliance with the oppressed as well as her politics of national separatism and independence: the lengthy and convoluted plot actually boils down to a single question, that is Ida's choice of partner: she rejects both powerful men who desire her passionately but whose desire is demeaning and harmful to her, Turkish conqueror and patronising Englishman, and opts for the Turkish slave-turn-Greek revolutionary, Osmyn. Secondly, we can perceive a structure based on the consistent contrast and comparison of London and Athens, England and Greece and the recurring juxtapositions of English and Greek perspectives that apparently serves another purpose, Morgan's relentless criticism of English culture and society. Whereas the first volume places an Englishman in Athens and focuses on the way he 'reads' Greek national character and construes the place, the fourth volume is to a large extent the reversal of the first, the account of Ida's own sorrowful, heart-rending adventure in London and a damning representation of the city

[7] Sydney Owenson, *Woman: Or Ida of Athens*, IV, 86. Henceforth referred to as *W*, followed by volume and page number.

based on her defamiliarising, innocent perspective and astonished response to a cruel, corrupt, degraded and degrading society. Her transportation to London transforms Ida, the Greek 'princess' and romantic heroine, temporarily, into a 'pathetic' female victim. And while Greece provides the romantic setting where human perfection, true love and revolution are made possible, London is the realistic setting bound to generate a tragic story recounting the undeserved victimisation of an innocent heroine.

Morgan's use of travel texts

Morgan conspicuously conflates her writer's identity with her sexual identity, raising expectations in the reader of a specifically 'feminine' novel to follow: with the pretext of apologising for her unorganised and rather fragmented way of writing she, however indirectly, boasts of and projects her self-image as an authentic Romantic genius, one relying exclusively on her inner resources and immanent powers of expression, which operate spontaneously, unmediated by 'pedantic' scholarly habits. This way she ironically converts the traditional assumptions of women's emotional, 'unintellectual' nature, in other words their 'constitutional' female characteristics, as well as her lack of formal, university education, into authorial strengths; as she puts it in a 'Note to the public': 'At once indolent and volatile in my literary character, to the avowal of faults which may be deemed constitutional, let me add that those circumstances most favourable to composition, that unity of pursuit which concentrates the whole powers of the mind to one object, that habit of abstraction […] have never at any period of my life been mine' (*W* I, v). Her social commitment as a writer, as well as her Romantic orientation, are stated more clearly in her letter to her publisher (December 10, 1809): 'I trust I am writing for society at large. I do not assert it in the egotism of authorship or the vanity of youth, but in the confidence of a mind whose principles are drawn from Nature; and who FEELING what it believes to be the truth, has no hesitation to declare it'. However, Morgan is also well known for the thorough and systematic research she would undertake before writing. Dixon, for example, comments on the 'much diligence' with which 'she had got up' the 'classical and topographical illustrations' she used for the writing of *Woman*.[8] This 'two-fold' approach to writing, a compound of seemingly incompatible activities, 'female', spontaneous expression of feeling and 'male' scholarly undertaking underlies the writing of *Woman* and marks Morgan's experimentation with genre.

[8] Hepworth W. Dixon, *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries, Correspondence*, Vol. 1 (London: W. H. Allen, 1862), p. 321.

Her complex purpose is reflected in the extraordinarily hybrid structure of her work: on the one hand it is a Romance (as she herself calls it) which allows for the free play of a forceful wish-fulfilment fantasy that inscribes the narrator's desire for freedom, love, and certainly power, too. On the other hand though, *Woman* is grounded firmly on and supported by the refracted language of non-fictional travel accounts, that add substantially to the creation of an illusion of reality and impart the established scholarly authority of famous male European writers to her own vision. Greece is the setting most appropriate for the unfolding of the most passionate love story, precisely because, 'the love of the modern Greeks, like that of the ancient, is, according to de Guise [*sic*] and other travellers a frenzy rather than a passion' (*W* II, 270). The description of Ida's father's mansion, an awkward but also 'exquisitely tasteful' compound of ancient and modern materials and Greek and Turkish architectural features, is illuminated by references to Stuart and Spon: '"Everywhere," says Stuart, "are to be met fragments of ancient marbles, pieces of ruined sculpture and architectural ornament" and "Nous y en vimes," says Spon, "dans les jardins et mêmes dans les cheminées"' (*W* I, 214); while the mansion's luxury is also justified by a reference to Guys, who explains that 'The Greeks when they have the favour of government, and think they may trespass against the laws, generally begin in the particular of building; in that case they know no bounds, but indulge their passion for a sumptuous palace, as the highest method of gratification' (*W* I, 215). Ida belongs to an aristocratic elite, she is an 'archontessa': 'the families styled archontic, are eight or ten in number, and mostly on the decline. According to the testimony of all modern travellers, they are the most haughty and the proudest persons in the world' (*W* I, 213). Indeed, *Woman* is marked by an obsessive insistence to present both the setting and the national characteristics of the Greek characters as 'real', to offer, that is, a reliable account of Ottoman Greece. Yet, Morgan's footnotes and endnotes (she uses both) are not always accurate, sometimes are difficult to trace and sometimes are rather vague.

Her most important pre-eighteenth-century source is the seminal work by the antiquarian Jacob Spon, *Voyage d' Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce, et du Levant* (1678), an important corrective of previous misinformation and misinterpretations concerning the location and identification of Athenian monuments. More than that, Greece emerges in his narration from the start as the country of the descendants of the Greeks. So the identity of the country is not confined to its ancient history, but is distinguished by the existence of 'historical inhabitants', and is portrayed almost as a domain: the object of his

exploration is to identify the 'present condition' of the ancient land.[9] In addition to Spon, the most important text that she uses systematically is Pierre Augustin Guys's popular and greatly influential *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce ou lettres sur les Grecs anciens et modernes, avec un parallèle de leurs moeurs* (Paris 1771), that was first translated into English in 1772 with its title changed to *Sentimental Journey through Greece*. Guys's pioneering project was precisely to show through systematic observation and research, that the Greek people, too, have survived, alongside their ancient buildings. He records in great detail the traditional customs of modern Greeks while simultaneously comparing them to the ways of the ancients and showing the similarities. Following Guys, the works by Claude Savary, *Lettres sur la Grèce* (Paris 1788), Sonnini de Manoncourt, *Voyage en Grèce et en Turquie* (Paris 1801) and, Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* (Paris 1782), are similarly engaged in the project of proving that the contemporary inhabitants of Greece are the true descendants of the ancients. *The Memoirs of the Baron de Tott, on the Turks and the Tartars*, translated in 1785 and Elias Habesci's *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1784) provide mainly information about the every day life of rich Turks and privileged Greeks; the rather fictionalised memoirs of de Tott in particular furnish Morgan's text with many of the prejudices concerning her presentation of the Turks, and particularly their lack of morals.[10]

But her use of travel books is not confined to scholarly citations proving the reliability of her descriptions. More than that, the travellers' narrations are integrated and interweaved with Morgan's own, blend smoothly with her discourse and provide her with both ideological precepts and stylistic features; they are not mere sources but important intertexts. The movement back and forth from contemporary to ancient Greece parallels Guys's own project, while often her story merely expands on travellers' accounts, offering fictionalised dramatisations of domestic scenes, luxurious dinners, Muslim feasts, and so on. As Ina Ferris puts it, the 'gap between the two texts ("scholarly" references and romantic fiction) turns out to be less a barrier than a border-crossing, as genres migrate back and forth and spill over into one another'.[11]

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[9] Nasia Yakovaki, *To Greece: a European Itinerary* (Ph.D. thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2001), p. 208.

[10] Morgan's novel is marked by a spectacular plethora of references to ancient and modern writers, which, sometimes, amount to no more than name-dropping. I chose to concentrate on the important travel texts she uses most consistently. As Morgan puts it, 'the united testimony [of modern travellers] presents a beautiful political problem' ('Preface', p. xvi).

[11] Ina Ferris, 'Writing on the Border, the National Tale, Female Writing and the Public Sphere' in *Romanticism, History and the Possibilities of Genre, Re-forming Literature 1789-1837*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan and Julia M. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

Additionally, travellers such as Manoncourt, Savary and certainly Choiseul-Gouffier who provides illustrations of his accounts, too, should be read in the context of William Gilpin's postulates of the 'picturesque travel' and the voyeuristic pleasure it theorises. Gilpin makes a distinction between what is beautiful in nature, or pleasing to the eye in its natural state, and what is picturesque, or capable of forming a picture or a painting.[12] It is possible to discern the affinity, as Dennis Porter has shown, between the postulates of picturesque travel and certain Romantic poetic practices: both make use of an omnipotent (male) gaze that shapes, moulds and controls its object of contemplation, both assume an erotic gaze which causes a figurative sexualisation of natural landscapes as well as cityscapes and, in the last analysis, both structure relationships between the male traveller, writer or artist and the object of his desire, observation and writing, intrinsically based on an irrevocable imbalance of power – since it involves a constructing and a constructed pole.[13] This is especially relevant to Morgan's work, because the whole of the first volume is a travel narrative focusing on the English Romantic protagonist, which invokes and reproduces, albeit ironically, the typical male narrative perspective of a privileged traveller in search of the picturesque. Throughout the novel, Greece is presented by way of detailed 'pictures', abounding in artistic and literary references, while both Greek land and woman offer themselves to the implied reader as spectacles, attractive, performing objects of desire acting out the Englishman's fantasy. So questions are raised as to the ways and the extent that Morgan, who has programmatically declared that she has written a 'woman's' novel, is implicated in the male discourse she has chosen to adopt or whether she may be somehow undermining it.

Furthermore, the make-up of Morgan's heroine and epitome of the ideal woman is in full agreement with descriptions of Greek women found in the travel texts she has read. The lengthy quotation from Sonnini de Manoncourt below is from Morgan's Preface and its explicit purpose is precisely to introduce Ida of Athens:

> The Greek females are, in general, distinguished by a noble and easy shape, and a majestic carriage. Their features, traced by the land of Beauty, reflect the warm and profound

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1998), pp. 86-108 (p. 96). Ferris refers to Morgan's previous novel, *The Wild Irish Girl*, which is also footnoted. The similarities between the two novels and their respective heroines are remarkable.

12 William Gilpin, 'Essay II. On Picturesque Travel', in *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty*, 2nd edition , 1794, (URL: ualberta.ca/~dmill/Travel/gilpine2.htm-).

13 For a relevant discussion see Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys, Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (New Jersey and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1991) pp. 125-26.

> affections of Sensibility; the serenity of their countenance is that of dignity, without having its coldness or gravity; they are amiable without pretension, decent without sourness, charming without affectation. If, to such brilliant qualities, we add elevation of ideas, warmth of expression, those flights of simple and ingenuous eloquence which attract and fascinate, a truly-devoted attachment to persons beloved, exactness and fidelity in their duties, we shall have some notion of these privileged beings, with whom Nature, in her munificence, has embellished the earth, and who are not rare in Greece.[14]

It is also worth mentioning that Manoncourt, whose pronouncement that 'he is writing from the heart' sanctions the subjectivity and emotionality of his narratorial position, uses a confessional style, creating a sense of intimacy with his reader, whom he now undertakes to convince of his first hand, literally hands-on, experience of Greek women:

> There it is that the genius of the artists of antiquity would still have the choice of more than one model. Mine is in my heart; and if the sketch which I trace of her is still far short of the original, if the fiery touches which are imprinted on my soul, seem to be extinguished on my picture, it is to regret, to affliction, to inquietude, to hope, to the different sensations which are blended and contending within me, that it must be imputed, rather than to the faintness of my colouring. O thoughts alternately delightful and tormenting! O recollections dear and painful![15]

Though Morgan does not quote the above extract, it is clear that her engagement with Manoncourt's text involves a positive response to the latter's invocation of an erotic fantasy (or memory) of a Greek lover. Arguably, Ida is modelled on the figures of Greek women encountered in eighteenth-century travel texts.

The first appearance of Ida in the novel is by way of an exhilarating sighting encountered by the Englishman during the course of his quest, 'a lovely, ideal form', a 'living' work of art combining classical and oriental elements:

> The haunt of his delightful and delighted wanderings […] seemed to smile into a luxurious garden. Sheltered by the fragrant summit of Hymettus towards the east, commanding a view of the savage rocks and towering fortress of the Acropolis to the west, and bathed by the incursive waters of the Engia. […]. The portico only formed the entrance to an apartment, which on one side was screened by a gilt lattice-work, thickly interlaced with Arabian jasmine; that at once diffused a mysterious obscurity and a delicious odour. The traveller gently drew aside the flowery shade, and the interior of the apartment lay exposed to his view. It was divided in the centre by a drapery, partly drawn aside; the remote division was a

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[14] Morgan quotes from the original French; here I have used the 1801 translation of Sonnini de Manoncourt's text, *Travels in Greece and Turkey* (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1801)

[15] Sonnini de Manoncourt, p. 4.

> bath; its bason, of parian marble was supplied by a fountain, which poured its waters in a murmuring sound over the aquatic plants which crept round it […]. The sopha, raised to a little height by a platform covered with Persian carpet, was placed beneath a canopy, whose drapery of muslin softened, without excluding, the reflection of the sun; and shaded from its ardors, the recumbent form of a sleeping girl. She resembled, as she lay, the beautiful personification of Bashfuleness by Corradini; for an air of vestal innocence, that modesty which is of soul, seemed to diffuse itself over a form whose exquisite symmetry was at once betrayed and concealed by the apparent tissue of woven air, which fell like a vapour round her. […]. There was something so delicate, so ideal in her form, that the very drapery that veiled it seemed to partake of its aerial character […]. It was impossible to mistake the bella reposa. – It was an Athenian girl. (*W* I, 21-3)

As the ideal Greek materialises in the guise of Antonio Corradini's neoclassical sculpture, the nature of the Englishman's pursuit in Greece is revealed to be no other than a dream come true, an excited 'discovery' or rather recovery of an object that projects his own desire as spectator, an object he already imaginatively possesses. Of course the name of the sculpture, 'Bashfulness', both foreshadows the ultimate failure of the relationship and encapsulates the tension inherent in the make-up of the heroine Ida, between her overwhelming sexual attractiveness and her deeply rooted sense of moral decency.

The problem is that when he finds out more about the sleeping beauty and the reputation of 'her extraordinary learning' reaches his ears, 'the smile of the Englishman disappeared'. His fear is repeated more than once: 'He trembled lest the learning and cleverness of Ida should betray themselves in the course of the political discussion, lest an axiom should banish a grace, or an argument disfigure a feature'. Moreover, the Englishman does not only fear her learning and her political involvement, but her poetic and artistic creativity too, in short, all the marks of her subjective expression and independent development: 'Oh, Ida! he exclaims, 'I sometimes fear that the brilliant visions of your imagination have absorbed the warmer feelings of your heart, and that, possessing the genius of a Sappho, you are yet destitute of her tenderness and her passion'. Significantly, the progression of their relationship is marked by his attempts to deceive her. 'Allow me thus also, the happiness of becoming your pupil. Every thing in your country awakens curiosity and inspires interest' he claims, but he proves more interested in watching her than listening to her. He is amazed with the 'energy in the manner of this speech' and the 'chord of enthusiasm thus awakened' and tries to 'perpetuate its vibration', not because he is interested in her views, but rather because he enjoys the spectacle of the animated Ida. He asks questions, sometimes with 'affected ignorance', and breaks forth in 'rapturous exclamations of delight' 'either feigning or feeling admiration' mainly for the purpose of seducing her. Ida is taken in by Lord B…'s charm initially ('you

breathed life into me', she says) but finally rejects him because of his essential incapacity to desire and respect her simultaneously (*W* I, 39, 56, 132, 77, 78). Within the framework of this subplot it is possible to discern a symbolic resistance to English male presumptuous authority, which pervades the whole novel; it goes hand in hand though, albeit uneasily, with an unrelenting display of exotic images that is intended to induce in the reader a fantasy of sensual and erotic profusion.

The description of Ida's father, for example, who also appears as the constitutive element of a picturesque scene transfers us once more to a world that recalls the European paintings of the period as well as popular travel texts, both with respect to the Greekness of the scene (the beautiful boys dressed with simple white tunics) and its orientalism, here associated with luxurious settings and the promise of sensual pleasures and indulgences: 'The archon was lying on an ottoman, enjoying the pleasures of the hookah; its amber tube* was placed in a crystalline vessel filled with rose water […]. His picturesque dress contributed to the interest his truly Grecian form and features excited […]. Two boys, beautiful as the winged genii of poetic fiction, with […] simple tunics of white muslin, lay on a carpet at their father's feet' (*W* I, 48). The asterisk is a footnote reference to the Baron de Tott, who, too, projects on his narrations his fantasy of oriental lavishness: 'The Greeks betray a mixture of Greek and Turkish manners; a little lamp burning before the Panaghea, or Virgin, sheds its light at the same time on the young slaves engaged in preparing offices of indulgence and indolence for their luxurious masters' (*W* I, 216).

Woman: Or Ida of Athens and *Corinne, or Italy*

There is another important intertext to Morgan's novel: Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), though a work of fiction, was a text widely used itself as a travel guide, carried along by English tourists in Italy to be read on the spot and provide the required emotional equipment for the most fitting response to the Italian sites. Similarly to de Staël, Morgan aims precisely at guiding and directing the readers' emotional responses and attitudes. Following the example of *Corinne*, in *Woman*, too, heroine and land, Ida and Greece, exist in an organic continuum and interdependence, the former having as it were 'organically grown', emanated from the 'rich soil' of the symbolic land, the latter relying on the former for its 'authentic' expression and communication, which is marked by her distinctive, effervescent manner. Indeed, Ida's main role and the aim of her various performances throughout

the first volume, is that of a travel guide who both represents and *explains* her country, firstly, by embodying herself the virtues and qualities associated with Greece thus functioning as living proof of historical continuity, secondly, through her various artistic expressions, namely her singing ('accompanied by a lyre, which, [according to Guys], resembles that of Orpheus as described by Virgil') but also her drawings (imitating 'some of those beautiful fragments which formed a part of the frieze of the cell in the temple of Minerva [and] are now to be seen in the collection of lord Elgin'), and, finally, through the use of her rhetorical skills, analysing passionately as much as eloquently, the history of her country, the evils of Ottoman rule and the need for a national revolution (*W* I, 217, 219). At the same time, the Englishman's guided tour around the Greek and Roman monuments of Athens becomes simultaneously a detailed tour for the reader, too, who re-traces imaginatively the footsteps of travellers such as Guys and becomes indirectly but intimately acquainted with Stuart's drawings.

One more similarity between *Corinne* and *Woman* should be noted here, which concerns the two heroines' ability to articulate and appraise so effectively the meaning of their land. In both cases, their analytic, critical and argumentative skills have been provided by an English education (which also explains Ida's fluency in English); which is to say that the supplier of the linguistic means that enable Ida to construct Greece and Greekness rationally is no other than English high culture, while the dependence of the formation of a Greek national consciousness on an inevitably orientalising English dominant discourse is thus symbolically reflected in the very design of the plot. This of course becomes the source of difficult contradictions in the expression of Ida's nationalism, who does doubt, initially, the Englishman's ability to understand the needs of the land and its people because he is a foreigner, and questions especially his willingness to sympathise with the poverty ridden Greek villagers, only to end up explaining that those poor Greeks who had not had her education are even more incapable than the outsider Englishman of realising their nation's predicament.

The name Ida is, we are informed, 'an ancient name', (so it serves to collapse symbolically the difference and distance between ancient and modern Greece), 'and was borne by the wife of Lycastus and the mother of the Cretan Minos' (*W* II, 110). It is also the name of the Cretan mountain described extensively by one of Morgan's most influential sources, the traveller Sonnini de Manoncourt. It implies thus the traditional alliance of earthbound woman and 'mother nature', except that mountain imagery usually appears in contemporary male Romantic poetry as symbolic of the sublime, 'male' forces of nature, whereas here it is submerged in the continuum nature/Greece/woman. The title's grandiosity is symptomatic of

Morgan's uncontained ambition, to project an augmented, transgressive, female self of boundless possibilities that has been traditionally the privilege of men and in particular Romantic poets. The 'Athens' of the title unambiguously functions as a patronym that symbolically determines Ida's identity, but the word Woman dominates the title as the main focus of Morgan's thematic concerns. And in placing womanhood and femininity prominently at the beginning of her title, Morgan proves to have assimilated effectively one of the most important implications of *Corinne*, its crucial contribution to the sexualisation of the whole of European geography. As James Buzard has shown, *Corinne* was one of the texts that contributed substantially to the feminisation of Italy and the South (as well as the consequent masculinisation of Britain and the North) and its establishment as a common-place trope in the nineteenth century: 'Standing near the dividing-line of the two centuries, *Corinne* helps us to connect those particular sexual experiences of which eighteenth-century men wrote and dreamed with the nineteenth century's habit of mapping Europe as a whole on a grid of sexual difference, the Alps often serving as the boundary between masculine North and Feminine South'.[16] *Woman* involves 'those particular sexual experiences of which eighteenth-century men wrote and dreamed' even more blatantly than *Corinne* and, of course, similarly to de Staël's Italy, Morgan's Greece is a 'woman country'; Athens, and by extension the landscapes and cityscapes of Greece are being animated, personified and endowed with female attributes. Even the male Greek hero, the Athenian Osmyn, who is really only an adolescent and usually covered up with long robes because he is in hiding, makes up an essentially feminine figure. I would argue that, given that he symbolises the enslaved 'woman country' he is necessarily feminine.

The feminisation of Greece and Morgan's gender politics

The most striking aspect of Morgan's text is its daringly gendered and gendering perspective. In order to achieve her purpose 'to delineate the character of woman in the perfection of its natural state', she has chosen to create imaginatively an Athenian heroine, not only because Greece is 'a country most favourable to those lovely and feminine attributes', but, most importantly, because *the country itself* seems to be comprised of 'lovely and feminine attributes':

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[16] James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to "Culture" 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 134.

> It is a country where the genial influence of climate, the classic interest of scenery, and the sublimity of objects with which it abounds, finely harmonize with that almost innate propensity to physical and moral beauty, that instinctive taste for the fair ideal and that lively and delicate susceptibility to ardent and tender impressions, which should distinguish the character of woman in its purest and highest state of excellence. (*W* 'Preface', ix)

The above statement is, in fact, polemical, as well as extraordinarily ambitious: Her intention is nothing less than to formulate and advance a kind of ultimate reference point for female nature, and her ideal of Woman is certainly not a modest one. Her choice of Greece as the topos of authentic, original womanhood, as well as the topos of inspiration for the liberated women of the future, constitutes an intervention to a predominant discourse; her strategy is to appropriate, in the first place, the belief in Greece's role as the originator of a European cultural identity, she employs it as a kind of rhetorical maxim, and then intervenes to modify it in a way that will allow for a privileged position of women in that scheme. She fights to interfere, that is, with the particulars of the 'styling' of a European cultural identity, by claiming, as it were, that in Greece 'we the European women of the future, too, trace our origin' and that, even more daringly, Greece, 'our origin' is intrinsically related to femininity.

Of course, the metaphorical conflation of woman and land has already been studied as a literary phenomenon.[17] In addition, the use of character as allegorical embodiment of the nation is a typical convention of the national tale. But Greece of all places proves a particularly suitable symbolic topos for the effective projecting and allegorising of the idiosyncrasies and, more importantly, the anxieties underlying Morgan's both nationalist and feminist projects. Firstly, because it was seen to harbour positive, hopeful revolutionary energies with symbolic dimensions; when we read that 'many a fair Leontium, and many a charming Aspasia may still exist in Athens, unconscious of the latent powers of their own ancient minds', we may legitimately infer that many English and Irish women would read into such a statement their own hopes of liberating their own suppressed energies and 'latent powers'. Secondly, because of Greece's uniquely ambiguous position with respect to Europe, as belonging geographically to the oriental periphery while claiming simultaneously a crucial role in the very construction of the cultural centre, it can serve as a subtle displacement of women's concurrent social marginalisation and idealisation as nucleus of the family. Above all, because the idea of Greece was conceived by way of an antinomy, imagined

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[17] See, for example, Sandra Gilbert, 'From Patria to Matria: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Risorgimento' in *Victorian Women Poets*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (London: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 132-66.

as a pastoral retreat and, at the same time, as the expression of the most sophisticated form of European civilisation.[18] Morgan uses this idealisation to measure against it both individual character and social behaviour: certainly neither the English society, as represented in the London chapters of *Woman* nor the English traveller, who is humiliatingly outwitted and outsmarted by Ida's knowledge and practice of philosophy and virtue, measure up to its demands.

Such a double construct corresponds to Morgan's strained feminist project, which is to embrace the idea of the strong, virtuous, and, above all, well educated 'rational woman' that was advanced by Mary Wollstonecraft, without, however, dispensing with the controversial ideal of a passionate, emotional and innocent woman that was promoted by male Romanticism. The latter is effectively represented by Ida's Romantic but intellectually limited male cousin's, Stamati's, description, who can appreciate Ida as a woman, but understands her very incompletely: 'Charming, too charming Ida, thou art all that woman should be, lovely, tender, gentle, and obedient […]; thy mind is soft and lovely as thy person; and the pleasure that animates thy every look, the indolence that possesses thy every faculty, declare the object of thy being' (*W* I, 68). Stamati is blind to the fact that 'the mind of Ida was […] dependent on itself – […] accustomed to rely upon its own resources for support and aid under every pressure' (*W* IV, 76).

A few years later, in 1840, Morgan published (as Lady Morgan) her partisan history of women entitled *Woman and Her Master*, where she elaborates further on her ideal of the perfect Greek woman, using it as a weapon against the doctrine of the separate spheres that was by then at the peak of its influence. Her argument, which she illustrates with numerous historical examples, is that women who were notorious for their beauty and femininity, who were idolised by their men as Muses, and who offered them abundant moral support as perfect wives in private, also possessed public power, and were as effective philosophers, scientists and orators as their men: 'In all public events of Greece, the influence of the female mind may be detected, even where, under particular institutions, her presence was forbidden'.[19] Ida is clearly the first, albeit fictional, in a series of ideal Greek

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[18] For a relevant discussion see Yakovaki, pp. 143-46. See also Timothy Webb's analysis of Shelley's pastoral vision of Greece in his chapter 'Romantic Hellenism', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 148-77. Shelley supported the substitution of Greece and the Grecian model for the supremacy of Roman civilisation and values, in the context of his opposition to those glorified images of aggressive imperialism that were engendered by the Roman model.

[19] Sydney Owenson, *Woman and Her Master* (rpt. Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, 1976), p. 279.

women in Morgan's writings, whose advantage is precisely the combination of power with desirability. After reading the whole novel it is impossible to interpret the final lines 'if it is for man to perform great actions, it is for woman to inspire them!' as advocating traditional female passivity and subservience; they have to be read, on the contrary, as the unambiguous expression of a stubborn will to power.[20]

Ida of Athens: Greek and/or Irish and/or Oriental?

Morgan wrote *Woman* three years after her major literary success, *The Wild Irish Girl*, had established her reputation as a successful professional woman writer and a defiant Irish nationalist, and the same inherent paradoxes and tensions that characterise her self-constructed Irishness are projected onto her literary representation of Greekness: Hepworth Dixon goes as far as to argue that '[t]he real interest of [*Woman: Ida of Athens*] lies in the unexpressed but ever present parallel between the condition of the Greeks, their aspirations after liberty, their recollection of old glories, and the condition of Ireland at that time'.[21] Indeed, many interesting twists in the plot (such as Ida's stubborn refutation of the English traveller's, Lord B…'s, erotic proposals) can be read as displacements of her uncompromising opposition to British colonialist politics.[22] This implicit identification of Greece and Ireland

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[20] For a different reading of *Woman* see Malcolm Kelsall, 'Reading Orientalism: *Woman: Or Ida of Athens*', *Review of National Literatures and World Report*, 1 (1998), 11-20 (p. 19). Kelsall discerns a female will to power in Ida's 'casting' of her lover, [Osmyn] into the role she has designed for him, that of 'the national leader'. '[T]his is what the female reading public delighted in. Woman makes Man in the heroic image she desires'. The somewhat disturbing but most interesting part of Kelsall's reading is, however, his conviction that Byron had been so influenced by *Woman* that he 'accepted eventually the role of Ida's Osmyn' and 'arguably achieved in historical fact the heroic status which Morgan had imagined in romantic fiction'. He thus 'challenges one favoured feminist reading of history: that in which Man shapes the image of dominated Woman. On the contrary, *Woman: Or Ida of Athens* is clear evidence how female fiction, and the influence of women on men, wrote Byron, and Byron made history. It more than wrote Byron. It led him into the disastrous cul-de-sac in which he died'.

[21] Dixon, p. 321.

[22] As Edward Said reminds us, despite the fact that 'the age of imperialism is conventionally set to have begun in the late 1870s, with the scramble for Africa, […] no matter how one wishes terminologically to demarcate high imperialism – that period when everyone in Europe and America believed him – or herself in fact to be serving a high civilisational and commercial cause by having an empire – from earlier periods of overseas conquest, rapacity, and scientific exploration, imperialism itself was a continuous process for at least a century and a half before the scramble for Africa. See 'Modernism and Imperialism' in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), ed. by Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said, pp. 69-75 (p. 71).

undermines, in the first place, certain pervasive assumptions in travel literature, where the oriental or orientalised place is usually presented as corrupt or degraded, and it also explains a certain obsessive emphasis on Ida's moral rectitude. In fact, the story of the English traveller's passionate desire to make Ida his mistress by the end of the first volume, which is further transformed into blatantly debasing lust by the fourth volume, obviously serves to expose critically the attitude of the typical English traveller to the other nation he sets out to explore and introduces a debate about travel and travel writing. Clearly, Morgan's intention is to speak for the other nation as well as the other gender.

Gender and national otherness though, in Morgan's work, habitually converge by means of orientalisation. Sexual allure in *Woman* is persistently conveyed by way of oriental imagery used both literally and figuratively but, significantly, the same is true for *The Wild Irish Girl*. This is, for example, how the English aristocratic Horatio muses upon his visit to his forlorn estate in Ireland: 'O! what arms of recrimination I should be furnished with against my rigidly moral father, should I discover […] *the harem* of some wild Irish *Sultana*'.[23] And the dancing Irish princess Glorvina is, accordingly, compared to an Egyptian dancing girl: 'Her little form, pliant as that of an Egyptian *alma*, floats before the eye in all the swimming languor of the most graceful motion'.[24]

Woman: Or Ida of Athens is a text fraught with both fruitful paradoxes and unresolved contradictions, which derive from the difficulty of endowing with subjectivity and independent will the orientalised other. Morgan's intention is to practice anti-colonialist politics, but she has not managed to distinguish her own discourse effectively from the dominant orientalising discourse of the time, that is to say, she tries to emancipate the other without de-orientalising it. So while it is true that she uses implicitly the instance of contemporary Greece to advance her nationalist case for Ireland, that her Greek Ida resembles greatly her famous Irish Glorvina of *The Wild Irish Girl* and that her indictment of Turkish violence is an indirect attack on British colonialism, a simple equation of the two oppressed nations, Irish and Greek, and the corresponding equation of the respective oppressor powers, the British and Ottoman empires, would be inaccurate in many respects. Ida has to fight for self-assertion and emancipation on two different fronts and against clearly differentiated adversaries, the Turkish Aga and the English Lord B…. Accordingly, in *Woman*, idealised Greekness is, on the one hand, sharply defined against the typically demonised Turkish national character on

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[23] Sydney Owenson, *The Wild Irish Girl*, ed. by Kathryne Kirkpatick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 34.

[24] Sydney Owenson, *The Wild Irish Girl*, p. 146.

a consistent axis of persistently reiterated antitheses, such as Greek innocence vs. Turkish manipulation, Greek artistic sensibility vs. Turkish vulgarity of taste, Greek spirituality vs. Turkish animal-like sensuality, Greek moral sense vs. Turkish sexual promiscuity, and so on; but, on the other hand, the relation of a Greek cultural and national identity to an English dominant culture (both symbolically projected on the design of the plot and manifested in the narrator's discourse) is much more ambiguously structured through continuous complex and strenuous negotiations. As in Morgan's Irish national tales, in *Woman*, too, the English traveller, who both allegorically embodies Englishness and displaces symbolically the implied reader within the text, is indeed the privileged audience, spectator, reader, the main addressee of the heroine's performance, even while being the recipient of harsh criticism and even while resembling the Turk in sexual promiscuity. Whereas the Turk as Other, charged with all possible evil attributes and harmful behaviours, is immediately and unequivocally rejected, the Englishman is presented as a kind of significant Other whom Ida is trying to both please and persuade, while struggling against his prerogatives and presumptions at the same time. Morgan's case as Irish/feminist/nationalist exemplifies, I believe, what Terry Eagleton calls the 'impossible irony' involved in both nationalist and feminist struggles:

> Sexual politics, like class or nationalist struggle will necessarily be caught in the very metaphysical categories it hopes finally to abolish; and any such movement will demand a difficult, perhaps ultimately impossible double optic, at once fighting on a terrain already mapped out by its antagonists and seeking even now to prefigure within that mundane strategy styles of being and identity for which we have as yet no proper names.[25]

The above statement is pertinent to a text whose project appears particularly challenging from the start, in that it cooperates with concepts of Greece, the Orient and femininity that have been fashioned and developed in mainstream male texts, in order to produce an alternative discourse, one that may promote the emancipation of women and subjugated nations.

The key images that illustrate best the intrinsic tension of Morgan's project are the various artistic performances of the heroines and especially the role of the ethnic songs, performed occasionally by both Glorvina, the Wild Irish Girl, and Ida of Athens in order to trigger the desire and secure the admiration of their English audience. The English are enchanted both by the overwhelming sexuality of the two exotic figures (both bizarre blends of the

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[25] Terry Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment', in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, ed. by Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 23-39 (p. 24).

'natural' and the 'learned' woman) and the nobility and sophistication of their ethnic tradition: the other is thus made appealing and respectable, but at the same time she becomes irrevocably trapped in the role of the spectacle and consequently necessarily implicated in her viewers' desire. As Natasha Tessone puts it, 'the ethnographic display used by Morgan as a political tool for representing and promoting Irish culture, seems to capitalize exactly on the fantasy of proprietorship it stimulates in the viewer'.[26]

For Ida it is a strategy of survival in an otherwise hostile and dangerous London, her means of accessing and establishing a position for herself in English high society. It happens toward the end of the fourth volume, which accounts her sorrowful adventures in London, where she has escaped to keep away from the Aga who has been ruthlessly persecuting her. It concerns a part of the novel where the figure of Ida has become quintessentially Irish. After a series of ordeals including complete destitution, she is miraculously saved by her rich English-Greek uncle and is introduced by him to London high society. Once more the English reader is displaced in the text, this time in the form of the guests, her audience, in her uncle's house, while the design of the plot implicitly but insightfully hints at the fact that the struggle of the oppressed for a desirable and respectable identity finally takes place inside the terrain, under the gaze and with the criteria of the oppressor.

Ida's performances do not only parallel those of Glorvina, they resemble those of Morgan herself, who, after the commercial success of *The Wild Irish Girl*, actually adopted in public the persona (full ethnic dress, hair-style, etc.) of Glorvina, precisely in order to gain access to the circles of the English aristocracy. As Morgan puts it:

> I found myself pounced on a sort of rustic seat by Lady Cork. I was treated 'en princesse' and denied the civilized privileges of sofa or chair, which were not in character with the habits of a 'wild Irish girl'. So there I sat, the lioness of the night, exhibited and shown off like 'the beautiful hyena that was never tamed' of Exeter change, looking as wild and feeling quite as savage.[27]

Morgan wrote *Woman* precisely at the time when she was mostly engaged in the public performances of Glorvina. Her Greek heroine, however, never compromises. The ending of *Woman* is not a typical closure by marriage; on the contrary, it envisages an alternative, more liberating, indeed,

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[26] Natasha Tessone, 'Displaying Ireland: Sydney Owenson and the Politics of Spectacular Antiquarianism', *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies*, (Fall-Winter 2002), 169-86 (p. 176).

[27] Quoted in Kathryne Kirkpatrick, 'Introduction', Sydney Owenson, *The Wild Irish Girl*, vii-xviii (p. x). For readings of Morgan's performances as Glorvina see Kirkpatrick and Tessone; both point to the contradictory functions of such performances, which provided Morgan with agency while simultaneously reinscribing racialist stereotypes.

revolutionary end of story for her heroine: Ida is rescued from London by Osmyn, the Greek slave with the Turkish name, whom she will marry and they will move to Russia where they are going to work together to prepare the Greek national revolution. The common desire for freedom and the commitment to revolution in this case make possible a marriage of equals based on both work and passion, and as such they also provide a means whereby the strict divide of private and public life is diminished.

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Maria Koundoura

Real Selves and Fictional Nobodies: Women's Travel Writing and the Production of Identities

Abstract

Mid-eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century travel narratives and novels on Greece like those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Shelley are filled with projected fictions of otherness, presented as fact. The supposed realism of these accounts guaranteed not only the imaginative hold of Greece, but also the originality of the fictive treatments. Like other such tales of the time, the story of Greece was open to the reader's sentimental appropriation: it allowed these travellers and their culture to write themselves in the discourse of Hellenism and the Greeks out as its ruins.

Disturbances of Memory on the Acropolis

Caught between myth and history, Greece has long haunted the Western imagination. Yet it is a ghost whose presence has been as much in doubt as affirmed. Countless visitors, determined to get ocular proof of the spirit of Greece, have ended up sharing Freud's reaction upon first catching sight of the Acropolis: 'So all this really does exist, just as we learned at school!'[1] Puzzled that he would question 'the real existence of Athens' he tried to make sense of it for himself. It was as if 'the person who gave expression to the remark was divided', he says, 'from another person who took cognizance of [it]; and both were astonished, though not by the same thing.'[2] He explains his initial reaction with the following example: 'it was as if someone, walking besides Loch Ness, suddenly caught sight of the famous Monster stranded upon the shore and found himself driven to the admission: 'So it really does exist the sea serpent we always disbelieved in!'[3] His other astonishment, he tells us, was at his doubt, after all, the educated Freud 'had been expecting some expression of delight or admiration' at the sight of the Acropolis and not one of disbelief.

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1 Sigmund Freud, 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis' (1936) in *Collected Papers*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), Vol. 5, pp. 302-12 (p. 304).

2 Freud, p. 304.

3 Ibid.

Freud wrote his 'Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis' in 1936, years after his 1904 visit. It is an essay in which he discusses 'derealization', which he defines as the displacement of the real from one's own relation with the object on to the object itself or, as he says, 'from my relation to the Acropolis on to the very existence of the Acropolis'.[4] 'In derealizations', he explains, 'we are anxious to keep something out of us', hence, 'they serve the purpose of defence'. Since, he continues, 'new elements, which may give occasion for defensive measures, approach the ego from two directions – from the real external world and from the internal world of thoughts and impulses that emerge in the ego', 'there are an extraordinarily large number of methods (or mechanisms, as we say) used by our ego in the discharge of its defensive functions […] the most primitive and thorough-going [is] "repression"'.[5] Repression, then, is what fuels 'derealization', and its storehouse is memory, hence the 'disturbance of memory and falsification of the past' it produces.[6] Using himself as the example again, Freud illustrates this point. 'It is not true that in my school-days I ever doubted the real existence of Athens', he writes, 'I only doubted whether I should ever see Athens. It seemed to me beyond the realms of possibility that I should travel so far – that I should "go such a long way"'.[7] Thus, he concludes, applying his theory, the disturbance of memory on the Acropolis was the result of his linking of his journey to 'the limitations and poverty of our conditions of life' – something that he had repressed – and his sense of his own 'superiority' over his father – something that he falsified in his memory as 'a feeling of *piety*' towards him.[8]

In its self-absorption, Freud's text is quite typical of most travellers' accounts to Greece. Like his, they too are always inevitably an analysis of the writer's own relation to Greece (and what it represents for them from their storehouse of memory) and never about Greece itself, even as they displace that relation and name it Greek. This essay looks at two such accounts and explores what they represent (and repress) in the name of Greece: that of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Shelley. Montagu's *Embassy Letters* (first published in 1763 but written in the early 1700s) helped define the literary style of its time, the emergent category of the real, while at the same time constructing the cultural fantasy that is Greece in the English literary imagination. In *The Last Man* (1826), Shelley, though not herself a traveller to Greece, through Raymond, the character representing Byron in the text,

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4 Freud, p. 307.
5 Ibid., p. 309.
6 Ibid., p. 310.
7 Ibid., p. 310.
8 Ibid., pp. 311, 312. 'He had been in business', Freud explains of his father, 'he had no secondary education, and Athens could not have meant much to him' (p. 312).

but especially through the figure of Evadne, the Greek woman who travels to England and destroys it from within, exemplifies not only the return of what Montagu represses but also the nightmare of the ideological fantasy that is Greece. In Shelley's apocalyptic tale, that nightmare, the Greece that is also part of the East and not only of the West, takes the form of a plague that destroys the civilised world. Between the actual travels of Montagu, then, this essay argues, that helped give rise to the birth of realist fiction, and the fictional travels of Shelley's characters, that helped realise the fantasy that is Greece, one finds the boundaries of the territory mapped by women travellers to that 'antique land'. Outside that territory, is the Greek woman – Evadne, the recalcitrant inside/outsider – trying to define herself out of the set of half-broken marble columns that is the most illustrious (and actual) trace of Greece within.

It is from that territory that I speak: it is the critical position informing this essay. Like Montagu and later the philhellenes portrayed by Shelley, I, too, am looking for the 'real' Greece in their texts. Unlike the philhellenist's (the Greek nationalist's, or the current tourist's), however, the places where the fantasy of the 'real' Greece was born and lives, my desire is powered by the dislocated immigrant's desire to find a way of being at home in a place (Australia initially and now the US) where 'real' Greeks are one of two stereotypes, ancient or 'ethnic'. Although both terms give me access to some sort of identity, in that its characteristics are the product of those dominant nineteenth-century discourses – philhellenism and orientalism – that identity is always 'ahistorical' or 'backward' in the eyes of the dominant culture (uni- or multicultural): hence, my journey into travel narratives, one of the birthplaces of Greek identity.

On 'Real' Greeks

''Tis impossible to imagine anything more agreeable than this Journey would have been between 2 and 3, 000 years since', writes Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in 1717 in the *Turkish Embassy Letters* of her trip to Greece, 'when, after drinking a dish of tea with Sapho [*sic*], I might have gone the same evening to visit the temple of Homer in Chios'.[9] One of the very first

[9] *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 3 vols, ed. by Robert Halsband (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), I (1708-1720), p. 423 (henceforth referred to as *Letters*). A note on my use of this edition: it is the most complete in its incorporation of the strange publishing and editorial history of the *Letters*. Montagu, following her aristocratic code that a person of quality should never turn author, never published her letters in her lifetime (Robert Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Oxford

travellers there, through Greece, Lady Mary found her literary voice, taking on the pseudonym of Sappho among her literary friends, Pope in particular, before and after the end of their friendship, and, in the process, fictionalising the Greeks she encountered.[10] Meanwhile, exemplifying the falsification of the past characteristic of 'derealization', the Greeks she encountered were either exactly like the ancients:

> I read over your Homer here with an infinite Pleasure, [she writes to her friend Pope] and find several little passages explain'd that I did not before entirely comprehend the Beauty of, many of the customs and much of the dress then in fashion being yet retain'd; and I don't wonder to find more remains here of an Age so distant.[11]

University Press, 1960), p. 255). They were first published in May of 1763 by T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt under the title, *Letter of the Right Honourable Lady M___y W____y M____e: Written, during her Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa.* The reputed author of this unauthorised edition is John Cleland. An additional volume to this was published by the same printer in 1767, also unauthorised and containing spurious additions, Halsband speculates that their authorship was the result of a wager that her style could be imitated. The third edition, published in 1803, was the first sanctioned by Montagu's family. In 1805 there was another, identical to the 1803 but for some additional letters. There was an 1837 edition that included introductory anecdotes by Montagu's granddaughter and an 1861 edition which is the most thorough in that it enlarged the existing letters with added material from the Wortley manuscripts that included Lady Mary's albums (*Letters*, xvii-xix). In the Wortley manuscripts there is a document written by her, and endorsed by Wortley, as 'Heads of L. M.'s Letters from Turky.' In it she had jotted down the initials of correspondents with brief summaries of the letters she sent to them between 1 April, 1717 and 1 March, 1718. Among the 'Heads' of letters for this date is the one I am quoting from.

10 Halsband, *Lady Mary*, pp. 113, 141-142, 144, 149, 150. There were earlier English travellers to Greece. Hakluyt tells us that in 1511 English ships sailed to Crete and Cyprus carrying English cloth in exchange for silks, spices, oils, carpets and mohair yarn. In 1513 Henry the VII appointed a consul at Chios; in 1520 at Crete. In 1553 Anthony Jenkinson was given freedom to trade in the Levant by Suleiman the Magnificent. In 1583 John Harborne, representing twelve merchants and the Queen, was the first merchant to take up residence in the Porte. (See Alfred Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 164). Montagu's presence in Greece was due to this expansion. On April 7th 1716 her husband was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court of Turkey. He represented the Levant Company. (Halsband, *Lady Mary*, p. 55). For historical accounts and bibliographies on the travellers and their tales, see Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, *The Eve of the Greek Revival: British Travellers' Perceptions of Early Nineteenth Century Greece* (London: Routledge, 1990); Hugh Tregaskis, *Beyond the Grand Tour: The Levant Lunatics* (London: Ascent Books, 1979), and Robert Eisner, *Travelers to an Antique Land: The History and Literature of Travel to Greece* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

11 Montagu, p. 332.

Or, exemplifying, also, the mechanism of repression at work in the experience of 'derealization', they were invisible: 'Alas!' she writes ignoring the people she saw, 'The wonders of Nature alone remain'.[12]

Although produced and themselves demonstrating the convergence of orientalism and philhellenism, Montagu's Embassy letters have been read as orientalist only.[13] From her famous depiction of the Turkish baths, to her description of the 'the fair Fatima' – a woman so replete with oriental splendour that Lady Mary worries that her sister (the recipient of her letter) will think that she has degenerated into 'a downright storyteller' of the type that wrote the 'Arabian Tales' – to her description of the house of the Grand Vizier, and of a Turkish marriage ceremony, she certainly follows the orientalist mode.[14] Right down to telling an almost risqué story of a Spanish woman, abducted by a Turkish admiral, whose fate, Montagu tells us, 'modesty' prohibited her from recounting properly.[15] The fact that she had the Turkish admiral be a perfect gentleman and that she praised the civility of the Turks does not stop her from following the tradition of the oriental tale. She tells her sister that *The Arabian Nights*, with which her own descriptions might be compared, 'were written by an author of this country and (excepting the enchantments) are a real representation of the manners here'.[16] And just in case her equation of Fatima's 'politeness and good breeding' with that of the English court is misunderstood, she also tells us that Fatima's mother was Polish, hence her civilised manner and good conversation.[17] These are representations of representations, as Said has argued of orientalism, down to the reference to *Arabian Nights*, that most cited of orientalist books.[18] She authenticates them, makes them 'real', through her presence and her 'eye witness' account.

Events in her life, episodes in a narrative that is only interested in itself, the people she describes function as a testament to her literary abilities and her character in the eyes of both her famous and familiar correspondents. 'I dare say', she begins the 1717 letter to Pope, 'you expect at least something new in this letter, after I have gone a journey not undertaken by any Christian

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12 Ibid., p. 423.

13 See, for example, Elizabeth Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1716-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), and Joseph Lew, 'Lady Mary's Portable Seraglio', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 24 (Summer 1991), 432-50.

14 Montagu, pp. 168, 158, 159, 157, 174, 168-69.

15 Ibid., pp. 170-71.

16 Ibid., p. 157.

17 Ibid., p. 158.

18 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

for some hundred years'.[19] Yet, immediately afterwards, and in a highly ironic manner, she recounts an episode where she nearly fell overboard as she was crossing the Hebrus. 'If I had much regard for the glories that one's name enjoys after death', she ruefully writes, 'I should certainly be sorry having missed the romantic conclusion of swimming down the same river in which the musical head of Orpheus repeated verses so many ages since'.[20] Then she mocks the other travellers 'who have found it a subject affording many poetical turns'.[21] 'We travellers', she writes to her sister:

> are in very hard circumstances: If we say nothing but what has been said before us, we are dull, and we have observed nothing. If we tell any thing new, we are laughed at as fabulous and romantic [...]. But people judge of travellers exactly with the same candour, good nature, and impartiality, they judge of their neighbours [...]. I depend upon your knowing me enough to believe whatever I seriously assert as the truth.[22]

The measure of truth in Montagu, as we see above, is directly the product of her character and not any external reality. She claims the truthfulness of her descriptions on her word. She describes what she sees and, since she is truthful, what she describes is also truthful. In other words, her descriptions are true because they are hers and not someone else's. They are also true because they are unlike someone else's, that is, they are original and not clichés like other travellers' and those 'bright wits'' that are Pope's friends.[23]

Her claims to originality and truth, and the denouncing of any extra-textual reality other than her own, link the Embassy letters with the new category of the real that was part of the discourse of fiction in mid-eighteenth century England. According to Catherine Gallagher, the real was a highly charged term at the time: 'A massive reorientation of textual referentiality took place' and the unmapped and unarticulated 'wild space' of fiction became the 'preferred form of narrative' and the novel the preferred form of fiction.[24] She argues that, before this point, texts that we now call fictional were classified according to their implied purposes, their forms, or their provenance, but there was no consensus that they all shared a common trait.[25] She is supported in this argument by other recent histories of the novel that have also noticed this shift towards explicit fictionality in narrative. Unlike previous histories of the genre, they wonder not where the taste for realistic

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19 Montagu, p. 117.
20 Montagu, p. 117.
21 Ibid., p. 118.
22 Ibid., p. 157.
23 Ibid., p. 118.
24 Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Act of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. xvi, 164.
25 Ibid., p. xvi.

novelistic fiction came from but why fiction became its preferred form of narrative. In *The Origins of the English Novel*, for example, Michael McKeon has traced it as the result of an underlying epistemological shift from truth-as-historical-accuracy to truth-as-mimetic-simulation.[26] He argues that it was the widespread acceptance of verisimilitude as a form of truth, rather than a form of illusion or lying, which made fiction a category and simultaneously founded the novel as a genre. With the legitimation of the verisimilar (as opposed to the historical), Gallagher concludes, building on McKeon's work, the new category of fiction renounced historical truth claims and replaced them with mimetic ones. Their 'truth' rested not on any extra-textual references but on their lack of referentiality.[27]

Contrary to Ian Watt's argument that 'formal realism' was a way of trying to disguise or hide fictionality, Gallagher suggests that 'realism was the code of the fictional'.[28] The 'wealth of circumstantial and physical detail' in novels, she argues, that referred to nothing and 'nobody in particular' should be viewed as 'a confirmation, rather than an obfuscation, of fiction'.[29] Fictionality, for Gallagher, 'simultaneously, if somewhat paradoxically, allowed both the author and the reader to 'be acquisitive without impertinence'. That the story was nobody's made it entirely the author's; that it was nobody's also left it open to the reader's sentimental appropriation', that is, to his or her emotional identification and 'ownership' of the novel.[30] Unlike 'true' characters (like the ones in scandal, for example), fictional nobodies, were 'a species of utopian common property, potential objects of universal identification' that everyone could have a sentimental 'interest' in without paying any of the penalties.[31] This is the main point of Gallagher's book whose purpose is to examine the affective force of fiction. 'Eighteenth-century readers identified with the characters in novels *because* of the characters' fictiveness and not in spite of it', she tells us. 'Moreover, these readers had to be taught how to read fiction, and as they learned this skill (it did not come naturally), new emotional dispositions were created' which

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[26] Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). Other studies include Lennard Davis's *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), in which he argues that the novel developed primarily out of what he calls the 'new-novel matrix', that is, journalism, scandal, and political and religious controversy. See also J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth Century English Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990).

[27] Gallagher, p. 165.

[28] Ibid., p. 174.

[29] Ibid., pp. 174, 173.

[30] Ibid., pp. 174-75.

[31] Ibid., p. 172.

formed the basis for the modern 'self'.[32] The primary one of these is one that is still in use today: the ability to invest and divest emotionally with characters we know are not 'real'.

In Montagu's text the 'real' is signified by the Greeks she encounters. As 'the remains of an age so distant', she tells us, they are 'the truth that furnishes all ideas of pastoral'. In other words, they illustrate the realism of Theocritus's descriptions and, in that hers correspond with his, the realism of her own. History, in the meantime, resides in descriptions of the Turks whose realism has an extra-textual basis that she contests as a lie (as in the case of her response to Knolles and Hill's histories but also other travellers' accounts). The literary realism of the Greeks functions as a shield against accusations of fancifulness. Without these peasants, Montagu's text would be just another oriental tale, history, in the form of Theocritus's writing, would be the literary genre of the pastoral, and both would be 'lies'. With these peasants, Theocritus's pastoral becomes historical and, in that she verifies his realism, so does her own work. By making the literary past historical, that is, by 'demonstrating' its reality, Montagu produces the conditions of representability that organise her narrative and give it the status of the real. It is this kind of realism, however, that makes her self-professed mimetic representations unreal because fiction, insofar as it claims to be mimetic, admits that it is a construct. Eighteenth-century readers knew this and it is precisely for this reason that they read novels. As Gallagher has argued, they provided a means for identifying with the universal and particularising it as one's own.[33] This is why, for Gallagher (following Foucault), fiction, through its 'as if' worlds, functions as a 'benign instrument of self-discipline, at once regulating, normalising, and individuating its readers'.[34]

One of those 'as if' worlds was Greece, a historical non-place until its 'discovery' by travellers such as Montagu and its introduction into the mid-eighteenth century literary marketplace as a realistic fiction. As fictional nobodies, 'a utopian common property', Greeks could be identified and 'sympathised' with, that is, their 'reality' could be experienced as the reader's own. Gallagher uses Hume's concept of sympathy to make her point about the reader's 'affective pulsation' with fictional characters.[35] For Hume, 'sympathy', she explains, 'is not an emotion about someone else but is rather the process by which someone else's emotion becomes our own'.[36] For the

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32 Ibid., p. xvii.
33 Gallagher, p. 168.
34 Ibid., p. 284.
35 Ibid., p. xvi.
36 Ibid., p. 169. Hume identifies three principles through which this happens: certain sense data communicate the idea of someone else's emotional state, that idea becomes an impression

mid-eighteenth-century reader, realist fiction offered the means through which this could happen: its characters were suppositional identities belonging to no one (a key element in Humean sympathy), as opposed to historical identities belonging to someone.[37] It has been my contention that by associating them with literary precedents – Theocritus's peasants – Montagu obliterates the historical identity of the modern Greeks she encounters and turns them into the nobodies of realist fiction. This textual practice, and not the fact that she was 'actually there', helps her readers identify with the Greeks. As she herself shows – in her criticism of other travel writers' work as 'diversions', in her insistence at being dissociated from them (and from histories), and in her desire to be seen as 'truthful – being there was no guarantee of the 'truthfulness' of one's account. Claiming the truthfulness of one's accounts on the fact that they were one's own, that is, a product of one's authorship, though, was.[38] It is to such an author's 'realist' account of Greece that I now turn. It is in her text that we find the figure of another traveller, the Greek woman in England, and through her we see the return of what has been repressed in 'derealizing' fictions like Montagu's.

The Return of the Repressed

Of the thirty-five books on Greece published between 1800 and 1826, Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man* is the most striking.[39] It is also the best example of the wave of Philhellenism that hit Britain during the years of the

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through certain relational principles (cause and effect, contiguity and resemblance), and the impression can, under certain conditions become so enlivened that it becomes a sentiment. See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 319. 'The conversion of idea into sentiment', Gallagher tells us in her reading of Hume, 'is most likely to occur when all three relational principles operate in a way that obscures the "otherness" of the original sufferer' (p. 169). 'The paradox of Humean sympathy', she concludes, is that 'another's internal state becomes 'intimately present' only by losing its distinct quality of belonging to themselves'.

37 Gallagher, p. 168.

38 Especially after the 1710 Statute of Anne, often called the first copyright law in English history, and its implication that copyright might be a property of the author (Gallagher, p. 155). See also Mark Rose, 'The Author in Court: Popevs Curll (1741)', *Cultural Critique*, 21 (Spring 1992), 197-217. It is ironic that despite Montagu's centrality in this milieu of the rise of the authorial property, the *Letters* were published without her involvement – she had entrusted them to a virtual stranger from whom they were stolen and a hastily published copy was produced in 1763.

39 See Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, pp. 6-7, where she also notes that ten unpublished diaries and journals of that same period also exist in libraries and archives in Britain.

Greek struggle for independence from Ottoman rule (1821-1830). A strange tale of a Greek-born plague that destroys the world, it paints a picture of Greece as a 'picturesque' place filled with a 'noisy populace' dressed in 'gaudy colours'. At the same time, it also represents it as a place of 'grand historic association' that 'should be rescued from slavery and barbarism and restored to an illustrious people, famed for genius, civilisation, and a spirit of liberty'.[40] Although initially set in a future Republican England (sometime after 2073) – not only directly in Volume II but also in its preface (set in 1818) and even in Volume I's thinly veiled autobiographical elements – the story is centred on Greece. It documents Greece's rediscovery by travel narratives of the kind contained in the author's introduction that frames the novel, travels that, the author tells, occasioned the discovery of the 'Sibylline leaves' that led to the writing of *The Last Man*.[41] It portrays its war of liberation, the Philhellenic movement, and Greece's displacement of Rome as the origin of not only English but also Western culture's history and periodisation.

Most of the scant and primarily feminist criticism of the novel, concentrating on its autobiographical elements, reads *The Last Man* as a self-conscious attempt by Shelley to represent the erasure of history.[42] Anne Mellor, for instance, sees *The Last Man* as 'the first English example of what we might call apocalyptic or 'end-of-the-world' fiction', in which Shelley 'finally demonstrates that no ideology, including her own theory of the egalitarian bourgeois family, can survive the onslaught of death'.[43] Citing the fact that the novel was written at a time of great personal crisis – she had lost three of her four children, Percy Shelley had drowned in a shipwreck, and Byron had just died in Greece – Barbara Johnson argues that Mary Shelley documents not only the erasure of her personal history but also the history of Romanticism.[44] Finally, Steven Goldsmith, in his argument that the novel marks the origin of a feminist discursive practice, claims that '*The Last Man*

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40 Mary Shelley, *The Last Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 170, 176.

41 *The Last Man*, p. 5.

42 A notable exception is Lee Sterrenburg's essay, '*The Last Man*: Anatomy of Failed Revolutions', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 33 (December 1978), 324-47.

43 Anne Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York: Methuen, 1988), pp. 148-149.

44 'In this novel', Barbara Johnson writes 'Mary Shelley does more than give a universal vision of her mourning, she mourns for a certain type of universal vision', '*The Last Man*', in *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*, ed. by Audrey Fisch, Anne Mellor, and Esther Schor (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993), pp. 258-266 (p. 263).

seems to represent [...] the erasure of identity and its displacement by difference in discourse'.[45]

All of these critics are curiously silent about Greece. When they do address it, they treat it as a metaphor for the 'real' history in the novel – Shelley's gender politics and her critique of Romanticism's ideology and the idea of a universal discourse. They use it to provide coherence to their argument on history's erasure. Nowhere do they discuss the fact that the material history erased is also, in fact primarily, Greece's. The monstrous plague that descends upon the Greek revolution and stops it dead on its tracks is not read as a denial of the birth of Greece's modernity but as a critique of 'a certain male fantasy of Romantic universality'.[46] Barbara Johnson broaches the fact that the novel is silent about 'the political consequences of this suspension of the final confrontation between East and West', but only to tell us cryptically that this silence exists because the 'question of the relation or of the non-relation between East and West' is 'badly posed' in the novel.[47] How and why, and what are the consequences of this silence are questions that are left frustratingly unanswered by Johnson. Her primary aim is to argue that 'in the last analysis [*The Last Man* is] the story of modern Western man torn between mourning and deconstruction'.[48]

Shelley's ambivalent representation of Greece as both the origin of civilisation and, in that it is plague inflicting, the cause of its destruction is the key to the critical silence on Greece. It is also the key to what I read *The Last Man* as being about, that is, a representation not of the erasure but of the impossibility of history's erasure. Ironically, this attempt is not located in Shelley's obvious and stereotypically philhellenic portrayal of Greece as a place of 'grand historic association' that must be rescued from slavery. Nor is it located in her text's utopian narrative content and its intimation that we can survive the end (otherwise how would we be reading the story?). Instead, one finds the impossibility of history's erasure in the contradictory space occupied by modern Greece. Produced by the convergence of orientalism and philhellenism – her representation of Greece as a space emptied of people, 'a darksome gulph', and her desire to represent only dead Greeks – its traces are everywhere in the novel, setting its limits.[49] As such, this space is what Michel de Certeau calls the original 'nothing' which is indispensable for any

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45 Steven Goldsmith, 'Of Gender, Plague, and the Apocalypse: Shelley's *Last Man*,' *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 4.1 (1990), 129-173, (p. 166).

46 Johnson, p. 263.

47 Ibid., p. 264.

48 Ibid., p. 265.

49 *The Last Man*, p. 184.

orientation and which cannot have a place *in* history because it is the principle that organises history.[50]

It is through this principle that Lionel Verney – who calls himself an 'outcast' because of his 'uncouth' and 'savage' ways and his 'war on civilisation' – defines himself.[51] The self-titled last man of the novel tells us that he 'began to be human' only after he 'studied the wisdom of the ancients […] [and] the metaphysics of Plato'.[52] Only then can he tell the reader at the beginning of his story: 'I am a native of a sea-surrounded nook [...] the earth's very centre was fixed for me in that spot, and the rest of her orb was a fable, to have forgotten which would have cost neither my imagination nor understanding an effort'.[53] The 'rest of [the earth's] orb' is represented by Greece in the novel; it is the fable that he is referring to here. As a 'fable', a non-place, Greece is transformed into a chronological postulate that is at once erased in the narrative but everywhere presupposed in it, impossible to eliminate. Verney thus begins his story with a lie, because to forget plague-inflicting Greece is all that his efforts are about and that cost him dearly: his friends, his countrymen, the world. His insular belief that the plague 'drinks the dark blood of the inhabitant of the south, but it never feasts on the pale-faced Celt' does not bring him and his world much protection.[54] England might be an island but, mirroring Constantinople, 'hemmed in by its gulphs', its inhabitants die 'like the famished inhabitants of a besieged town'.[55] He also ends his story with a lie when he denies that his efforts to erase this memory of Greece as deadly have also brought forth history: the history of his narrative and, in that we are reading it, the history of *our* time. 'At first I thought only to speak of plague, of death, and last, of desertion', he writes, 'but', he continues denying the dominant content of his narrative, 'I lingered fondly on my early years, and recorded with sacred zeal the virtues of my companions. They have been with me during the fulfilment of my task'.[56] That task was, as he tells us after he realised he was the last man, to bid

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50 De Certeau argues that 'By allowing the present to be "situated" in time and finally, to be symbolized, narrative posits it within a necessary relation to a "beginning" which is *nothing*, or which serves merely as a limit. The anchoring of the narrative conveys everywhere a tacit relation to something which cannot have a place in history – an originary non-place – without which, however, there would be no historiography […]. This initial nothing traces out the disguised return of an uncanny past'. See 'The Historiographical Operation' in *The Writing of History*, trans. by Tom Conley (New York: Columbia, 1988), pp. 56-114 (pp. 90-91).

51 *The Last Man*, pp. 13, 14, 19.

52 Ibid., pp. 29, 77.

53 Ibid., p. 9.

54 Ibid., p. 233.

55 Ibid., p. 148.

56 Ibid., p. 466.

'farewell to matchless Rome [and] to civilised life', select a 'few books; the principal [being] Homer and Shakespeare', and embark on a journey to Greece in order to place himself among 'the spirits of the dead'.[57]

Whether he writes about it or not – and in the novel despite his telling us otherwise, he does – the plague (and Greece) will be and is heard. Personified in Evadne, the first named carrier, who in turn personifies Greece, the plague lives on, despite Evadne's death, Greece's silencing, and even Verney's death;[58] not, in Goldsmith's affirmative and somewhat utopian reading, as the site of a 'feminist discursive practice' nor as 'the nightmarish version of the desire to establish a universal discourse' (Johnson) but as the historical reality that is modern Greece in the text, a part of the Orient that is struggling to define and produce itself – following the course of the plague – out of Asia. This Greece of 'gaudy colours', unruly populace, and warlike chieftains was the fertile ground and transmitter of the plague and, as such, it and not the already absent from Constantinople Muslim presence is 'the power that must be eradicated from Europe'.[59] It is the 'monument to antique barbarism' and not the Turks as the novel tells us.[60] As Adrian, very Apollonian hence 'truly Greek', reports upon returning to England from the Greek front, there is an indistinguishable savagery between Greek and Moslem.[61] Thus, the 'mighty struggle there going forward between civilisation and barbarism' is not, as the Eurocentric historical frame of the novel would have it, between the Greeks and the Turks but between 'truly civilised' men and barbarians, among whom one also finds the Greeks.[62] The impossible presence of these later Greeks, so different from the classical ideal, demonstrates the tension in the novel between representing the erasure of history and its impossibility. This tension is evident in the uneasy coexistence between the violent Eurocentrism at the heart of the novel that reads Greece as its origin and justifies the Greek siege of Constantinople and the discourse of ethnocentrism which Shelley cannot escape and which has her openly criticising the Greeks and in so doing undermining the language of hierarchy necessary to the European rationalisation of domination.

Nowhere is this tension more evident than in the novel's representation of Evadne as not only the unassimilable, but also the destructive, gendered outsider. Her textual space is occluded, though not without consequences. In her exclusion from authorship, her very accurate story of the plague read as

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57 Ibid., pp. 468, 469, 470.
58 Ibid., p. 35.
59 Ibid., pp. 185, 189.
60 Ibid., p. 174.
61 Ibid., pp. 26-27, 161-62.
62 Ibid., p.153.

the ravings of a lunatic by all, Evadne destroys the novel's centre from within.[63] Not only is she the carrier of the universal devastation of the plague, but also of a series of individual disasters that destroy all the relationships – personal and public – among the band of friends of which she was a member (albeit a peripheral one). Married once, and the cause of her husband's ruin and eventual suicide, Evadne travels to England. There, her affair with Raymond brings down the sign of the male's social power – the family and its ideal of monogamy – as it also brings down the entire English government. His domestic private and public life ruined, Raymond goes to Greece in pursuit of personal glory only to end up dying conquering a plague-ridden and deserted city. His wife, Perdita, commits suicide and Adrian, who had escaped his initial love of Evadne with only a brush with madness, dies of the plague on his way to Greece. Evadne, the 'clever Greek girl', the 'monument of human passion and human misery', leaves a trail of destruction wherever she goes. As Steven Goldsmith has argued, she 'not only threatens the patriarchal order but in fact collapses it', she 'remains unpredictable and beyond patriarchal assimilation'.[64]

Evadne, however, also collapses the matriarchal order, for she is excluded from authorship not only from the text proper but also from the distinctively female space of the introduction's 'Sibylline cave'.[65] Although, (through its reworking by Classics) by culture and, as the unassimilable other, by function closer to the Sibyl, because of the Sibyl's 'scattered and unconnected' pages and her own 'wild and lost exclamations', Evadne's, like the Sibyl's, 'verses' are also either excluded or transformed.[66] 'I have been obliged to add links, and model the work into a consistent form', Shelley, who is also the narrator, tells us in the introduction to Volume I.[67] 'My only excuse for thus transforming them', she explains, 'is that they were unintelligible in their pristine condition'.[68] This exclusion allows the reader to see that what appears to be outside the text and its patriarchal order, the introduction, which has been celebrated by all feminist readings of the novel as the highly feminised and highly empowered place of the imagination, is already inside the highly disciplined, masculinist, and culturally mediated history of origins in the text. This history has England and the male as its centre, despite its

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63 Ibid., p. 184.

64 Goldsmith, pp. 148, 149.

65 In *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar are the first to point to the 'dim hypaethric cavern' as being a distinctly female space (pp. 95-104).

66 *The Last Man*, pp. 6, 181.

67 Ibid., p. 6.

68 Ibid., p. 7.

assertions otherwise. Although Shelley designates her source in a woman's vision, 'the Cumaean damsel', she transcribes that vision 'with the selected and matchless [male] companion of my toils'.[69] This male companion is also instrumental in identifying the cave as the Sibyl's and in gathering the leaves upon which the Sibyl's 'verses' were written using his understanding of their inscriptions as his measure.[70] Shelley's argument then, that 'obscure and chaotic as they [the verses] are, they owe their present to me, their decipherer' is not exactly true.[71] They are already mediated by her male companion's knowledge and his power to name a new 'Hellas'. To translate the prophetic leaves through this mediation necessarily excludes something of the Sibyl's discourse. It puts her in 'English dress' which she can never fit, hence Shelley's snips and tucks.[72]

Despite its portrayal of the gendered subject as the outsider, Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* uses the discourse of ethnocentrism to incorporate that outsider into a masculinist and Eurocentric narrative of origins. Evadne's recalcitrant and nationalist self makes it impossible for her to be included in this history. She might have an 'English dress' and be a master of disguise – twice she has passed as a man, once anonymously submitting drawings for an architecture competition and once dressing as a foot-soldier – but the 'too great energy of her passions' never allows her to pass as the sublimated English subject (the real/dead Greek of Classics and of travellers' tales like Montagu's) with whom readers can identify.[73] Hence Verney, trained in 'the wisdom of the ancients' and, as we see in the last pages of the novel through his journey to Greece Homer in hand, well on his way to joining them, does not recognise her when he encounters her in the battlefields of Greece.[74] This is why he goes against the novel's (and his own) initial Eurocentric claim on Evadne and sees the erstwhile 'beloved Ionian' as a thing of darkness, 'a form [that] seemed to rise from the earth', 'a Sultana of the East'.[75] This is also why Mellor, Johnson, and Goldsmith – despite their efforts to rewrite masculinist fictions of origins through Shelley's text – cannot identify (with) Evadne and, in their readings of *The Last Man*, either they do not see her at all (Johnson), or see her as a duplicitous homewrecker (Mellor), or as a general metaphor of otherness with no specificity to her displacement (Goldsmith).

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69 Ibid., p. 6.
70 Ibid., pp. 5, 6.
71 Ibid., p. 6.
72 Ibid., p. 6.
73 Ibid., p. 113.
74 Ibid., p. 75.
75 Ibid., pp. 35, 180, 182.

Because of her inability to be translated in the novel's (and its critics') Eurocentric terms, Evadne will always remain an outsider – a Sibyl unable to represent herself.[76] To speculate on how she might have, is to ask questions of the Sibyl that are the measure of her own self-knowledge. For, as her textual history shows, the Sibyl always echoes another. Ovid has her say that she is 'known by voice alone', but that voice is never hers.[77] In Virgil's account we see the violence of her speech: 'So did Apollo/ Shake reins upon her until she raved, and twist the goads/ Under her breast'.[78] Apollo's violence on her corresponds directly to her prophetic ability: the Sibyl predicts the future only under the whip and the words are never her own but those of the power that enters her as an alien presence (whether it is Apollo or, like Shelley, another woman wielding his power). The Sibyl and, by the novel's metonymic register, Evadne and Greece cannot represent themselves. As both the text and the criticism of *The Last Man* show nor can they be represented. Instead, their stories (along with those of Montagu's Greeks) are replaced by the self-generated and projected images of otherness that its observers need to see themselves in. These have not only aesthetic repercussions, as Said has argued of orientalist practices, but also, as the institutional history and hold of the methodology of Classics show, political ones.[79] Thus, while in its reconstruction of the 'Sibylline leaves' Shelley's text reflects the Classics and earlier travel writing's aesthetic representations of Greece as the storehouse of memory, the origin of Western culture, in incorporating Evadne's (and the Sibyl's) discourse as part of that narrative of origins, it also performs the political move of appropriating the terms of Evadne's otherness: she replaces (puts in English dress, renders 'intelligible' is her justification) those qualities of Evadne that are the very reason for her being denied the right and the ability to represent herself.

The primary of those qualities is her teleology, literally, her end and the traces that it leaves behind (in the form of the Sibylline leaves which Shelley discovers on her visit to Rome and calls 'hers'). This is why the novel, we are told by Verney, is a 'monument of the existence of Verney, the Last Man' and why every character in the novel has an obsession with monuments.[80]

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[76] *Pace* Goldsmith, who argues for a reading of Evadne as analogue to Sibyl 'as *she* might have represented herself' (p. 148).

[77] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 14, l. 155, trans. by Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 343.

[78] Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 110-12, trans. by L. R. Lind (Bloomington: Indiana Univesrity Press, 1962).

[79] Said, pp. 137, 146-148. Martin Bernal's *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Western Civilization*, Vol. I (London: Free Association Books, 1987) offers (and for some is) the most controversial example of the political consequences of the rise of Classics.

[80] *The Last Man*, p. 466,

'All I ask of Greece', says Raymond after he hears of the death warrant that Evadne has put on him, 'is a grave. Let them raise a mound above my lifeless body, which may stand even when the dome of St Sophia has fallen'.[81] By representing the end of history and the last man as English, Shelley represents the impossibility of this history's end. For the history, and the end upon which this history is based, is that of the 'illustrious' and dead Greeks whose 'scenes' the Englishman Verney and his friends 'renewed', that is, replaced. 'To our right', Verney tells us of his first trip to Athens, 'the Acropolis rose high, spectatress of a thousand changes, of ancient glory, Turkish slavery, and the restoration of dear-bought liberty; tombs and cenotaphs were strewed thick around, adorned by ever renewing vegetation; the mighty dead hovered over their monuments, and beheld in our enthusiasm and congregated numbers a renewal of the scenes in which they had been the actors'.[82]

Although it might appear that he is also hoping for such a renewal when, after resolving to write his 'monument', he dedicates it 'TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS DEAD./SHADOWS, ARISE, AND READ YOUR FALL!/ BEHOLD THE HISTORY OF THE LAST MAN', the fact that it is not clear which shadows he is addressing here makes his history irreplaceable.[83] Are the shadows those of the dead Greeks, those of his world, or those of his future readers whose fate simply by touching his book and thinking about it (for that is how the plague is transmitted in the book, by touch and by thought) is sealed? Replacing past, present, and future, *The Last Man*'s teleology enacts a historical totalisation that the Greeks could never achieve. Had they been able to, the plague that personifies them in the novel, would have been victorious and it would 'really' have brought about the end. In other words, we would all be 'real' Greeks, which, in the terms of the texts that I have been reading in this essay, would make us either fictional nobodies or dead.

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[82] Ibid., p. 170.
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Churnjeet Kaur Mahn

The Sculpture and the Harem: Ethnography in Felicia Skene's *Wayfaring Sketches*

Abstract

Felicia Skene's account of her residence in Athens between 1838-1845, *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks* (1847), was typical in its approach to Greece as a semi-antique landscape, abounding in silent ruins for the appreciation of an audience versed in the classics. However, Skene was interested in portraying a Greece that had recently emerged from Ottoman rule and explored this through her description of a young Greek woman, Katinko, who serves as an allegory for Greece's incomplete emergence out of the East and into Europe. Descriptions of Katinko posit her somewhere between an antique sculpture, and an orientalised slave. The attempt to historicise Katinko as a character, to understand her through a material historical context, offers one of the first sustained attempts by a British woman to describe a real Greek woman. While Katinko's mother may have escaped a Turkish harem, the Orient continues to infect, or disrupt Skene's vision of her as a paradigm of Hellenic beauty. This offers a crucial variation on the traditional harem travel narrative by women: penetrating the harem in this context is no longer literally gaining access to one, but is a metaphorical device to consign Greek women to an interstitial space between East and West.

The reception of Felicia Skene's *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and the Turks, and on the Shores of the Danube, by a Seven Years' Resident in Greece* (1847) upon its publication was rather inauspicious. Despite the relative novelty of a travel account to Greece and to Turkish provinces (due to a combination of factors including the expense of travel, and the relatively undeveloped network of resources for tourists and travellers) *Wayfaring Sketches* was reviewed as a derivative and objectionable example of contemporary travel writing by *The Athenaeum*. For an irked Henry Chorley, an *Athenaeum* reviewer, *Wayfaring Sketches* was yet another inaccurate and embossed travel narrative:

> This volume is principally devoted to the records of a voyage; –and is written, throughout, in an objectionably florid style. It is time to reckon with our picturesque writers; whose present fancy for trope and transubstantiation in language bids fair to give Posterity serious trouble and matter for wrangling. Let none of them pretend that it is an old fashion revived. Accuracy and neatness were once through indispensable to metaphor – precision to poetical diction.[1]

[1] [Henry Chorley] 'Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and the Turks, and on the Shores of the Danube', *The Athenaeum* 1034 (1847), 881-84 (p. 881).

Felicia Skene's first full-length work may not have generated the warmest critical praise, but couched in the sentiments of Henry Chorley are some of the justifications for considering *Wayfaring Sketches* as an exceptional contribution to women's travel writing about Greece.[2] A few contentions underpin Chorley's approach to travel writing: a 'florid' style is not appropriate for 'records' of travel and the accompanying technical skill for negotiating any literary embellishment of the record through metaphor is unsophisticated and technically deficient, in other words, the metaphor by lacking 'accuracy' and 'precision' manages to miss its target in a collection of loosely connected recollections punctuated by hyperbole. Taking advantage of the anonymity of the volume, Chorley proceeds to see these qualities as especially indicative of women writers of the period: '[w]e are less precise in our forms of language and figures of speech now-a-days; – and were the above example solitary, we had not remonstrated. But let the ladies, in particular, look to it – or the schoolmaster will be among them!'[3] Short of admonishing only women with the crime of rhetorical inaccuracy, Chorley issues a caveat containing a barely veiled contempt of the lady writer on the road.

Posterity, rather than wrangling over these accounts, seems to have ignored them altogether: in the only Anglophone monograph containing a comprehensive survey of travel literature about Greece, Robert Eisner argues that there was a 'lack of good material by and about women in the literature of Greece'.[4] Excluding nineteenth century women wholesale, Eisner appears uncritically to reproduce Chorley's prejudice. Disassembling some of the contentions behind Chorley and Eisner's benchmarks involves exploring two contingent categories: that of travel writing on Greece itself and the contribution of women to the genre, especially in terms of positing a female

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2 A short collection of poems had been published four years prior to *Wayfaring Sketches*: see Felicia Skene, *The Isles of Greece and Other Poems* (Edinburgh: R. Grant and Son; London: Longman, 1843). Although they have been largely neglected as juvenilia, there is a demonstration of her early fascination with harem narratives, especially the capture of Greek Christian women. Written in the style of Lord Byron, her poetry followed a formulaic narrative of capture, and then rescue by a Christian lover.

3 [Henry Chorley] 'Wayfaring Sketches', pp. 881-884 (p. 881).

4 Robert Eisner, *Travelers to an Antique Land: The History and Literature of Travel to Greece* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), p. 228. Eisner does offer limited acknowledgement to selected women travellers in the twentieth century, he regards men as the most original observers of Greek life and culture until then. The neglect of women's writing on Greece in recent recoveries of travel literature is notable and partially attributable to the problem of its geographical grouping. Not part of the traditional Grand Tour, it was also excluded from conventional itineraries to the East.

agent who can travel and embody the authority to comment on, and eloquently describe, the experience of another culture.

While not strictly a traveller in Greece, Skene found herself resident there between 1838-1845 with her family and had access to privileged circles of society, including being received at court by Queen Amélie. In the attempt to situate her narrative historically, she falls between three dominant types of woman traveller in Greece: the roving aristocrat, the scholar, and the modern tourist. In the construction of a genealogy for British women's travel in Greece, prior to Skene a very limited and exceptional list of aristocrats emerge; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu skimmed past Greece in 1717, imagining a prospect redolent in antiquity if she were but to land. By 1789, little had changed in the profile of the woman traveller: Lady Elizabeth Craven, on her way to Constantinople, did manage to stop off at Athens, and offered a description of a harem. Sydney Owenson's (later Lady Morgan) *Woman: Or Ida of Athens* (1809), though not a travel narrative, was mainly set in Athens, but with an aspect woven from the travel narratives of Lord Byron and French travellers to offer a allegory for the Greek nation in the style of Germaine de Stäel's *Corinne* (1807).[5] In 1810, Hester Stanhope, a figure of celebrity in her own time as well as the history of travel, set off for the Mediterranean, sailing through Greece and meeting Byron on the way.[6] Part of the novelty of these accounts was that they were offered by a woman at all: tagged onto a journey to the East more readily than an extension of the Grand Tour, these early women travellers sailed in yachts, rode horses, took in the Parthenon, and left via Piraeus to offer an aesthetic exit. Montagu, Craven and Stanhope were celebrities in their own right due to their vivid and adventurous accounts of travel through a virgin territory for the independent lady traveller.

The travellers that came in their wake offered accounts based primarily on their own physical experiences recounted in the form of a journal, diary, or set of vignettes recorded chronologically and offering a paratactic record of events.[7] What marked Skene apart so distinctly from the travel writers that came before was her distinct lack of celebrity and the literary quality of her work; Skene's family were well connected but as a young writer and resident of Greece, the scenes of her narrative drew from her observations and

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5 For a comparative account of the two works and their respective allegorical strategies, see Evgenia Sifaki's essay in this collection, 'A Gendered Vision of Greekness: Lady Morgan's *Woman: Or Ida of Athens*'.

6 Although her journey dates from 1810, the records of her travels were published in 1845.

7 Mary Georgina Emma Dawson-Damer, *Diary of a Tour In Greece, Turley, Egypt and the Holy Land* (London: Colburn, 1841) and Elizabeth Alicia Maria Grosvenor, *Narrative of a Yacht Journey in the Mediterranean During the Years 1840-1* (London: John Murray, 1842) are indicative.

experiences of daily life in Greece for a British resident. Although lacking an itinerary, her narrative is organised relatively conventionally around the places she visited at various times of her residence; despite this, Skene includes some dedicated sections to the customs and practices of the contemporary Greek life. Skene's desire to engage with the local populations of Greece and offer a sustained analysis of the state of the nation through illustrative and contemporary social examples derived from personal experience and observation, set her apart from the women writers that preceded her. Skene was not a lady of leisure; her return from Greece marked the beginning of long career in philanthropy. Writing religious tracts during the 1850s and 1860s, she was a central figure in the Oxford Movement which promoted religious obedience and missionary zeal, along with publishing a series of novels based loosely around her observations of social issues such as crime and prostitution. The author of novel such as *Inheritance of Evil: Or, The Consequences of Marrying a Deceased Wife's Sister* (1849) and *Hidden Depths: A Story of Cruel Wrong* (1866), Skene's interest in writing was routed in addressing the social, and particularly legal, obstacles to women's democracy. Writing in a sensational style, her novels preached morals through shocking readers with the 'real' vices of prostitution of slavery. Chorley's objection to Skene's is rooted in a prejudice against travel writing that was personalised and politicised by discussing the social conditions of women. Along with this, however, is a contingent problem at the centre of discussions of travel writing: can this 'embossed', literary style be considered an any more or less accurate account of travel than a more 'factual', paratactic account? Not the adventures of an aristocrat, nor the catalogue of sites and sights from the lady on tour, Skene marked a new concern in modern Greece within British women's travel literature, one which demonstrated a keen interest in the moral compass of Greek women through personal interaction.

E. C. Rickards's memoir of Skene remembers a woman whose interest consistently lay in analysis rather than description: 'her interest went beyond their [the Greeks] outward appearance. She soon learnt to talk modern Greek – an accomplishment she put to good use on occasion years after at Oxford. The work, the pleasures, the superstitions, the quarrels, the love-affairs of the peasants, were all interesting to her, through her gift of imagination and sympathy'.[8] Skene's narrative is more than the memoirs of a holiday: her interest in modern Greece was ethnographical. While lacking the scope, pretension and ambition to offer an exhaustive ethnographical study of modern Greece, Skene's literary ambitions were to capture Greece through

[8] E.C. Rickards, *Felicia Skene of Oxford: A Memoir* (London: John Murray, 1902), p. 37.

her observations of singular incidents and customs that she encountered in everyday life and abstract them to make general comments about the state of the nation. Skene viewed travel as potentially formative and transformative of the experience of knowledge:

> [W]e must go from place to place and from country to country, reading the nations, with their various religions and social systems, not singly but in connexion with one another, till, from the whole, we draw the analysis of the actual state of things, and of the progress, or, it may be, the decadence of the cause of truth – of gospel truth; and not only can we not attain to this knowledge in our land, but we shall equally fail in our attempt, though we wander all over the earth, if we carry with us our home atmosphere wherever we go.[9]

Skene utilises a conventional trope in travel writing, that of distinguishing oneself from the ordinary troop of tourists, to underwrite the authority of her observations.[10] What this also establishes, however, is the basis for an ethnographical authority, which can study cultures at various points of 'progress', especially in terms of a surveying gaze that accumulates and assimilates knowledge. Discussing imperial exploration, Mary Louise Pratt summarises how the surveying gaze became a paradigm in Victorian travel writing:

> No-one was better at the monarch-of-all-I-survey scene than the string of British explorers who spent the 1860s looking for the source of the Nile. As the Linnaeans had their labeling system, and the Humboldtians their poetics of science, the Victorians opted for a brand of verbal painting whose highest calling was to produce for the home audience the peak moments at which geographical "discoveries" were "won" for England.[11]

Describing one of the functions of the 'imperial eye', Pratt illustrates how the eye could act a powerful metaphor in narrative description. An analogous operation can be found at work in ethnographical accounts: as a technology of the Enlightenment it was instrumental in underwriting the authority of a grand narrative documenting the onward march of modernity. The eye, as well as surveying landscapes can now take in historical surveys and increasingly 'see' a map whose horizon is constantly on the move as more knowledge is collected in aiding a global, humanistic understanding. These

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9 Felicia M. F. Skene, *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks, and on the Shores of the Danube, by a Seven Years' Resident in Greece* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1847), pp. 169-170. Henceforth cited as *WS*.

10 A common trope to create a distinction between the traveller and the tourist; for a detailed account of emergence of this distinction in the period see, James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

11 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 201.

examples worked as an ongoing extension of Edmund Burke's belief that: 'now the Great Map of Mankind is unrolled at once; and there is no state or Gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same time instant under our View'.[12] The survey, easily digestible through a single, unifying glance, became a paradigm for the understanding of history as a network of connections, which could be viewed in totality, something Anne McClintock has called 'panoptical time'.[13] One of Skene's intentions was to precisely locate the place of Greek women in the history of progress, and to see how and when her Greek sisters could stand on an even plane with women in Britain.

Skene weaves vignettes from her travel encounters with a cultural commentary that engages in the then familiar image of Greece as a woman in chains, awaiting rescue from the Ottomans. Her early volume of poetry *The Isles of Greece and Other Poems* contained a poem entitled 'The Greek Slave', a rehearsal of the familiar allegory of Greece as a woman in chains subject to the mercy of an oriental despot. Drawing from Byron's poetry, so fond of envisioning Greece as female sculpture, womanhood at the point of expiry, or beautiful cadaver, Skene on one level uncritically engaged in the network of established images of Greece in British Philhellenism. The purpose of this allegory has been explored by Katherine E. Fleming who has argued that allegories of Greece as a woman, chained and on the way to a harem, were used to justify a British pseudo-colonial hegemony over representations of Greece, primarily through positing the West as the agent of deliverance.[14] However, the gender of the viewer becomes integral to the context; the critical reassessment of women's travel writing has explored women's problematic relationship to orientalism,[15] a relationship usually explored through an analysis of women travellers' access to the space of the harem, most notably in the works of Billie Melman and Reina Lewis.[16]

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12 *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. by George Guttridge, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961) III, 351.

13 By which is meant the ability to survey a totality from an invisible subject position, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 37.

14 Katherine E. Fleming, 'Greece in Chains: Philhellenism to the Rescue of a Damsel in Distress' in *Women and the Colonial Gaze*, ed by Tamara L. Hunt and Micheline R. Lessard (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp 38-48. Fleming offers a useful survey of the image of Greece in chains and the conflation of woman with nation.

15 The role of modern Greece is not explicitly mentioned in Edward Said's thesis and is notable in its absence: Said does briefly discuss Ancient Greece, but its relation to the project of orientalism is not considered.

16 See Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1996) and *Rethinking Orientalism*: *Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (London: I. B. Tauris,

However, in a post-independence Greece the persistence of this allegory ceased to have any basis in material reality: although key territories such as Crete were still under Ottoman rule until the twentieth century, an independent Greece did exist. One wonders, then, what allegorical function was served by references to the harem in a post-Ottoman Greece; put differently, why was the metaphor of the enslaved Greek woman still so potent for a Western audience?

Skene's rewriting and exploration of this motif focuses on taking a real, breathing, historically situated Greek woman and allegorising her into modern Greece, in other words, taking a real subject of ethnographical study and conflating her with an allegory which robs her of specificity. The story of Katinko, a young Greek woman in Skene's service, appears in the introductory panorama of Skene's time in Greece. Taking a few pages of the total narrative, it presents a paradigm for considering Skene's precise approach. An attempt to propose an ethnography of Katinko's presence, to account for the types of discourses, times and spaces which go towards her literary construction, the story illustrates Skene's departure from the British women writers on Greece that came before her as well as her own approach to constructing a surveying gaze to assess Greece and the Greeks.

Katinko is first offered to the reader as a sculpture caught in an instant of observation, frozen and waiting revival:

> Katinko was more like the most exquisite statue than a human being – the repose of her matchless features, and the marble paleness of her complexion, were quite unequalled. We soon found, however that she shared in a deficiency common to all inanimate pieces of sculpture, and more general among the living beings than we are disposed to admit. The mind, the intellect, that should have illuminated that perfect countenance, existed not, and she was a very child in capacity and in tastes. Still we took a great interest in her; and our distress was extreme when we discovered, after she had been with us two years, that she had consented to enter on a new line of life very different from that we could have desired for her. (*WS* 21-2)

Under the surveillance of Skene's eye this description begins to outline how the ethnographical gaze specifically operates in her account: her subject is cast as an object, a static symbol belonging more properly to another temporal and cultural field. The prevailing stylistic mode can still be read in the vein of Germaine de Stäel's *Corinne* (1807) and Lady Morgan's own Greek version, *Woman: Or Ida of Athens* (1809) which relied on female characters that were a loose collection of *tableaux vivant* performing a national identity aligned with its antique past. In the words of Chloe Chard:

2004). A useful survey of the harem in Western art can be found in Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2000).

'by drawing on the elision between the feminine and the personal, travel writings invest both living female antiquities and feminized ruins with a power to mediate between a public, historical domain and a more intimate, personal private world. As a result, these varieties of attraction supply an especially useful means of converting historical time into personal time'.[17] As a rhetorical strategy, Chard follows the conversion of timelessness into time: a disparity central to the operation of the national tale, but the primary difference here is Skene's projection of this rhetorical strategy onto a very alive woman with her own personal history. The negation of Katinko's personal time can be read through the strategies of anthropological practice. In his influential *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, Johannes Fabian examines how anthropology, specifically through ethnographical practice, uses time and knowledge to generate power.[18]

> Anthropology contributed above all to the intellectual justification of the colonial enterprise. It gave to politics and to economics – both concerned with human Time – a firm belief in "natural." i.e., evolutionary Time. It promoted a scheme in terms of which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slop, a stream of Time – some upstream, other downstream.[19]

Implicit in anthropology is a political and imperial impulse at once to distance and discipline: the distance was temporal but allowed the observer to produce authoritative accounts of cultural practices. The deeply a-historical, anthropological uses of time that Fabian describes depend on stasis and generalisation; the temporally disjointed subject is cast as Other to be subjected to observation and pushed out of a coeval time frame, while the object of study becomes a living anachronism waiting for the delivery of the anthropologist, a practice termed 'allochrony' by Fabian.

Returning to the practice of anthropology through ethnography, Skene's privileged sight is deployed to cast Katinko as a walking, talking antique. As an antique, Katinko belongs more properly to the staging of archaeological artefacts in the space of the British Museum than the landscape of

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17 Chloe Chard, 'Grand and Ghostly Tours: The Topography of Memory', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 31.1 (1997), 101-108 (p. 103).

18 Fabian's arguments have been discussed in the context of travel writing by several critics, see for example: Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference*: *An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991); Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism*: *Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004) and Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: From an Antique Land* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

19 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 17.

contemporary Greece. In this sense Skene's depiction is akin in its operation to Hiram Powers's controversial and sensationally popular nude, *The Greek Slave* which was completed in 1844. The sculpture depicted the naked body of a Greek woman, her eyes averted in shame from her invisible Turkish master; her weight rests on her left foot to allow the right to slightly turn her body, protectively, away from the gaze of the Turk as her chained hands cover her genitals. The drapery on the stand next to her cushions a locket and a cross, symbols at once of her faith, and her tie to a possible Christian husband or protector. The American tour of the sculpture raised twenty-three thousand dollars in receipts[20] while thousands came to see it in London's Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851.[21] With segregated viewings for men and women, *The Greek Slave* mixed high art and the titillation of an implied sexual narrative that the sculpture evoked. It was precisely this discrepancy between high art (what Elizabeth Barrett Browning dubbed the 'passionless perfection' of the sculpture) and the suggestion of violent rape by a Turk, that would make *The Greek Slave* such a controversial success. Sexed and sullied, the Greek woman Powers depicted was caught between a series of discursive contradictions.

The rise of museums in the nineteenth century, coupled with the broad appeal of developing exhibitions (especially those of Empire, or in the case of 1851, art and industry), created a new space for the consumption of images which where hitherto limited to a societal elite. Michel Foucault lists the museum as a type of 'heterotopia', or counter-site, a site linked to the space around it, but set apart from it through its inherent contradictions.[22] Heterotopias include museums, where meta-narratives of history can be assembled in one space as an archive, as a static narrative with a contextualising framework which was masked and invisible.[23] The space created by Skene for viewing Katinko relies on the recognition, and participation, of some of the viewing conditions of the museum; Katinko is to be gazed upon rather than engaged with as there is a distinct lack of character development or an examination of her life which is de-allegorised enough to

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[20] Joy Kasson, *Marble Queen and Captives: Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 50.

[21] Richard P. Wunder, *Hiram Powers* (Cranbury, London and Ontario: Associated University Presses, 1991), p. 246.

[22] Foucault discusses the term in 'Different Spaces', the text of a lecture presented to the Architectural Studies Circle in 1967 and first published in 1984. See Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume Two*, ed. by James Faubion, trans. by Robert Hurley and others (London: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 175-85.

[23] For a discussion of Greece as 'heterotopia' see Artemis Leontis, *Topographies of Hellenism: Mapping the Homeland* (New York: Cornell University Press), pp. 44-5.

be divorced from a narrative of modern Greece. Stockpiled amongst antiques and items from a diverse range of cultures, the museum manufactured another type of ethnographical gaze, which invited its audience to measure progress through the classification and disciplining of cultures into discrete categories that were an index to civilisation.

The description of Katinko does not end there however; Skene encounters a very different type of woman a year later:

> I was accosted in the street by a young woman in European dress, whose appearance was decidedly remarkable, from the outrageous violation of all good taste which characterized her attire. Not only was she loaded with feathers and ribbons, but her face was positively masked in paint, applied seemingly without any attempt at concealment! It was actually not until she turned towards me the exquisite profile which nothing could change that I recognised our once beautiful Katinko! (*WS* 22-3)

A new axis for measuring Katinko, and by association the state of modern Greece, is introduced. Ribbons, feathers, makeup and artifice characterise her description, and as Inderpal Grewal argues in her discussion of Indian women in the harem: '[a]rtifice and makeup became the trademarks of the prostitute, who must hide the depravity written on her face. Makeup symbolized an opacity that was to be found only in the prostitutes and, in some nineteenth-century travel narratives, on oriental women'.[24] In a critique of Burkean aesthetics, Grewal couples the use of makeup with a literal darkness of skin tone that came to be associated with moral deviancy and degeneracy; Katinko's skin becomes the battleground where the dark inscription threatens to eclipse the white. A radically different historical context emerges for the study of Katinko; still an object of study rather than a subject of action, her transformation is at once an extension of Skene's earlier description of Katinko's 'shallow' nature, but also a defiance of her description of an archetypally beautiful Greek woman. An imprisoned consciousness, Katinko offers an updated allegory for the Greek slave: rather than being literally imprisoned in a harem, subject to Oriental terror, the surface of her body becomes the site of this imprisonment, a surface which Skene to varying degrees refuses to map as part of Greece's modernity. Like *The Greek Slave*, Katinko is threatened by a delivery into the invisible, but suggested space beyond the sculpture, namely, that of the harem.

The harem became an increasingly potent site for eighteenth and nineteenth century travellers, armchair and literal, to the East; it at once represented a sequestered site of forbidden sexual excess and a real material locus for women's activity that Western women travellers could interact with. The former contention is perhaps best illustrated by the British artist, Thomas

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[24] Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 27.

Rowlandson (1757-1827), who produced an engraving entitled *The Harem* (1812), illustrating two apparently endless rows of nude women, in a variety of suggestive poses, with exaggerated buttocks, breasts and enlarged labia; in the foreground a Turk sits cross-legged, revealing the end of a conspicuously large and erect penis. The success of this pornographic satire depended on a familiarity with stereotypes of the harem and circulation of these images outside the regular and legal printing circulation; in other words, the harem's popularity has always depended on its psycho-sexual potential and its existence as a material site denied to male travellers. Billie Melman has offered one of the most comprehensive investigations into women's travel and the harem in the period and her analysis reveals a different site, one of domesticity and home life that sets women's travel narrative apart from the mainstream.[25]

However, the evocation of the harem in the present discussion borrows from both visions: the harem as space with no material reality and as a distinctive feature in the travel accounts of women. As Ruth Bernard Yeazell has noted, even as late as 1910, the Baedeker guidebook which was so famous for its exact maps, was forced to leave a blank for the site of an imperial harem, suggesting that conventional representational strategies predicated on visibility were inadequate for the description of such spaces, while paradoxically reinforcing their desirability and potency as sights not to be seen.[26] Skene's inability to recognise Katinko is the point at which the additional context of the harem can be given significance in the text: rather than being a real space, it serves as a metaphor for a vision of Greece that Skene refuses to document as part of its progress. If the metaphor here corresponds to a non-referential space, then it must be understood as a series of strategies, breaks and disruptions to Greece's access to modernity (through its orientalism) rather than an intertextual source or site in its own right. Specifically in the extract detailing Katinko's vocation as an actress in excessive makeup, this can be illustrated through the discussion of the veil which suggests a space behind it to be revealed, while defying the ethnographer's gaze.

In Mallek Alloula's analysis of postcards depicting Algerian women from the early twentieth century, veils are posited as the limit point between public and private spheres and beyond this opposition there is, 'an imaginary harem whose inviolability haunts the photographer-viewer'.[27] The analogy between

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[25] See Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992).

[26] See Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2000).

[27] Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, translated by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p.13.

ethnography and photography is particularly suggestive: although Skene's text is too early to discuss the comparative strategies, from the late nineteenth century it would become a key tool for the ethnographer in underwriting authority and authenticity.[28] The harem's presence in Skene's text manifests itself as a disruptive defiance to a European identity for Katinko. Her cultural positioning at the threshold of Europe, her construction as an ethnographical subject within a series of discourses (orientalism, hellenism and philhellenism) which place her in a contradictory series of temporalities, produces no single field within which to define Skene's work.

Edward Said's thesis on orientalism is of particular use here, especially as his evocations of Greece in his seminal study are purely classical; Greece as an idea or a reality, remained outside an oriental taxonomy:

> The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role is it to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. An Orientalist is but a particular specialist in knowledge for which Europe at large is responsible, in the way that an audience is historically and culturally responsible for (and responsive to) dramas put together by the dramatist.[29]

As a closed field, it remains unclear how Greece could straddle the distinction to transcend Said's model. Michael Herzfeld, in his own ethnographical study of the practices of anthropological research, interprets the location of Greece in the light of Fabian and Said's work:

> The Greeks of today, heirs – so they are repeatedly informed – to the glories of the European past, seriously and frequently ask themselves if perhaps they now belong politically, economically, and culturally to the Third World. Whether as the land of revered but long dead ancestors, or as an intrusive and rather tawdry fragment of the mysterious East, Greece might seem condemned to a peripheral role in the modern age.[30]

Skene's ethnography of modern Greece is informed by the discourses that have persisted in Greece's subjection to allochrony. Life was equated with modernity and an orientation that was unmistakably Western and neoclassical, a belief that colours her views of the Greek nation.

Skene uses an elaborate allegory to chart her encounter more specifically with another allegorised body, that of Greece herself:

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28 For another discussion of veils as limit points see Yegenoglu, pp. 39-67.

29 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 63.

30 Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology Through the Looking Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 3.

> We saw her first faint efforts – we marked her progress day by day, even as though we were watching the gradual restoration of life and health, to some fair being raised up from mortal sickness, which each hour brightens the returning glow upon the cheek and the sparkle in the eye. Gradually we became identified with all her varying hopes and fears; rejoicing with her rejoicing people, when some country more highly-favoured now reflected back on Greece the lights it had derived from her; and sorrowing with them, when the Great Powers to which she is allied threatening in their clashing interest to rob her again of her dearly-bought repose. (*WS* 8)

There are two temporal operations in this passage: there is the narrative time, which both Skene and Greece occupy together and an allochronic function, which casts Greece as an ethnographic object. Although temporally 'behind' Skene, the extensive use of metaphors of health ('fair', 'sickness', 'glow') and light ('brightens', 'sparkle', lights'), are deployed to see Greece emerging into a time frame coeval with Skene. The intention of the passage is an ideological alignment between Britain and modern Greece; Philhellenic Britain watches as Greece reorients itself away from Oriental backwardness towards Western progress. Despite the attempts to draw parallels, and ultimately produce a community of European nations, Skene's repetitive use of pronouns produces a panicked difference: 'we saw', 'we marked', 'we were watching', 'we became', versus 'her first', 'her progress', 'her varying', 'her rejoicing', 'from her', 'she is', 'her dearly-bought'. For all its claims of a sisterly bond between Britain and Greece, this extract lists concerns that are hardly mutual; the 'we' of the text is a Western witness to Greece's decline. Skene's attempt to distance her own position from that of British political involvement in Greece is a further attempt to create an all-seeing and impartial eye on the present condition of the nation.

Veering away from the explicitly political, Skene discusses less charged fields such as Greek art and music to find Greece literally out of tune with Britain: 'with regard to music, I really think there is an organic deficiency in the case of each individual Greek. It is impossible for them rightly to intonate the most simple strain, their ideas of an air are frightfully vague; singing in tune is a mystery they have never dreamt of solving' (*WS* 67). Complaining of the nasal quality of folk music, Skene makes an unwritten association between Greek and Turkish folk music, which carries the same nasal quality. Stuck in the dark, Greece needs to be educated into the West, with an aesthetic taste and standards appropriate to, and recommended by, Western Europe. For healthy progress, the childlike nature of Katinko must be tutored and supervised by Skene, her removal from Skene being the beginning of her apparent downfall and physical and mental corruption. The surveying gaze becomes not only a sanitising gaze but also a promise of progress with obedience. However, not all the Greeks were party to this blanket view: Skene's respect and admiration for the privileged circles of Athenian society

exempted them from her criticism. In the 1890s she received a series of papers containing information on prison reform in Greece, mainly implemented by Queen Olga. Keen to extol to virtues of prison reform and ingratiate herself with the Queen, she wrote a short piece for *Blackwoods Magazine* offering a brief sketch of Queen Olga's programme. Although she suggests that England might only feel surprise at the idea that, 'we in England could receive instruction or enlightenment from the Greece of modern days, in any department of our national system',[31] the virtue of Queen Olga is counterbalanced with the peasantry of Greece which offer the subject of reform. As E. C. Rickards observes, 'her characters if a low rank socially are generally far better drawn than those of a higher. They were often borrowed from life, and therefore he is more or less bound down to facts, around which her imagination plays with its vivid force of realisation'.[32] Using her 'imagination', Skene's writing is predisposed to cast and characterise Greece in terms of its peasantry, at once to create a 'child' that can be mothered, and an object requiring reform. Her Katinko is woven out of a variety of influences, some of them allegorical, ethnographical, literary and anecdotal, to offer a travel narrative that strays from 'factual' discourses but nonetheless constructs a vision of Greece that moves away from literary archetypes that preceded her to offer a more nuanced and troubled portrait of Greece in the West.

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[31] See Felicia Skene, 'The Treatment of Criminals in Modern Greece', *Blackwoods Magazine* 152 (1892), 54-61 (p. 54).

[32] E. C. Rickards, pp. 303-4.

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TD Olverson

‘A world without woman in any true sense’: Gender and Hellenism in Emily Pfeiffer’s *Flying Leaves from East and West*

Abstract

This essay provides a close reading of Emily Pfeiffer’s extraordinary travelogue *Flying Leaves from East and West* (1886). Pfeiffer’s late-Victorian vision of Greece not only incorporates her aesthetic responses to the decaying monuments of the ancient Greeks but also suggests how contemporary debates concerning class, racism, feminism and imperialism shape the observations of women travellers. Pfeiffer spent several months in Greece contemplating the art, architecture, literature and culture of the ancient Greeks. Her study of sculpture led her to conclude that the ‘feminine principle’ is largely absent from ancient Greek culture. Pfeiffer ends her Eastern narrative by revealing her deep ambivalence about a culture that she had previously so revered.

In 1880 Emily Pfeiffer wrote a poem entitled ‘Hellas’.[1] Like Byron and Shelley before her, Pfeiffer envisages a ‘new’ England in the poem, inspired by the glorious achievements of the ancient Greeks. However, in her travelogue *Flying Leaves from East and West* (1885), published only five years later, Pfeiffer reveals her deep ambivalence about the androcentric ancient culture, which she had previously revered. The narrative of *Flying Leaves* is discontinuous, divided between Pfeiffer’s trip to Asia Minor and Greece, and her travels ‘West’, in North America. This arrangement, of a divided East and West with a stable Britain at the centre not only suggests Pfeiffer’s imperialist sympathies, but also her interest in ‘democratic’ processes. Throughout the 1880s, Pfeiffer wrote a number of articles for the *Contemporary Review* and *Cornhill Magazine* on the status of women in Britain with regard to work, education, legal rights and suffrage.[2] In *Flying Leaves* Pfeiffer can be seen to exploit the potential of the travel genre as a form for social and political commentary. In the harems of Asia Minor and in Athens, Pfeiffer is able to find uncomfortable parallels with the

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1 The poem is included in the volume *Under the Aspens* (London: Kegan Paul, 1882).

2 Pfeiffer’s articles were later gathered together in the volume *Women and Work* (London: Trubner & Co., 1887). For a discussion of that aspect of Pfeiffer’s work, see Basil Herbertson’s unpublished, ‘The Pfeiffer Bequest and the Education of Women: A Centenary Review’. I would like to thank Mrs. Herbertson and the librarians at Hughes Hall, Cambridge, for allowing me access to this article.

disenfranchised women of Victoria's Empire. However, Pfeiffer's conflicting responses to her experiences in Turkey highlights Victorian configurations of the Orient and the complex role of women in the racist and imperialist discourses of the period. Indeed, *Flying Leaves* suggests how contemporary debates concerning class, racism, feminism and imperialism shape the observations of female explorers. Ultimately, Pfeiffer's extraordinary travel narrative can be seen as a radical political pamphlet, a treatise on aesthetic and ethical values and a re-evaluation of Hellenism and the influence of Greek culture on British society.

'Hellas'

Pfeiffer's first encounter with Greece was not as a tourist, but as a writer. Two years before she left for Greece, Emily Pfeiffer wrote 'Hellas'. As the title suggests, the poem is an attempt to reignite the flame of Romantic Hellenism for a late Victorian audience. Subtitled, 'An Invocation', the lyric can be seen as a tribute to Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Greece of their Romantic imaginings. The title is, of course, a direct allusion to Shelley's verse-drama, 'Hellas: A Lyrical Drama' (1822) and like Shelley's poem, Pfeiffer's 'Hellas' is an entirely textual construction.[3]

Shelley, who indiscriminately declared that 'we are all Greeks', was the first in a long line of writers who throughout the nineteenth century confidently asserted the similarities between the English and the ancient Greeks. Matthew Arnold famously compared Periclean Athens to Victoria's Empire, whilst John Stuart Mill felt that the battle of Marathon was a more important event in English history than the battle of Hastings. Later, Virginia Woolf would have a group of cultured English tourists to Greece observe that, 'Germans are tourists and Frenchmen are tourists but Englishmen are Greeks'.[4] In 'Hellas', Pfeiffer also depicts the English as the natural inheritors of Greek culture and values. Such ideological appropriations suggest how, as Siegel points out, 'colonisation may occur at the level of narrative and imagination as well'.[5]

Writing over fifty years after Greek Independence, Pfeiffer is not directly concerned with the struggles of modern Greece. Pfeiffer in fact transforms

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3 For a thorough discussion of Shelley's 'Hellas' and (phil)hellenism see Jennifer Wallace's *Shelley and Greece* (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan, 1997).

4 Virginia Woolf, 'A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus,' in *The Times Literary Supplement*, ed. by S.P. Rosenbaum, 11-17 September (1906), p. 979.

5 See Kristi Siegel's Introduction to *Issues in Travel Writing: Empire, Spectacle, Displacement* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 3.

Byron's revolutionary topos into an ideological location in which she can articulate her feminism. In Pfeiffer's revision, Greece is embodied in the figure of Athena. As a result, Pfeiffer effectively reconceives the social and aesthetic values of the ancient Greeks in terms of femininity. In fact Pfeiffer can be seen to restore femininity as a vital principle in the perception of Hellas:

> HAIL, Goddess of the heaven-reflecting eyes,
> Divine Athena! Thou whose sweet breath blew
> The message of the Gods the wide world through
> And showed us sovereign reason in the guise
> Of all-unearthly beauty; wake, arise
>
> With fresh revealings; where the plant first grew
> The fallen seed its life may still renew,
> And yield young off-shoots, strange to denser skies.

On one level, Pfeiffer's poem reflects the shifting conceptions of Hellenism in the late nineteenth century;[6] on another, Pfeiffer seems to anticipate the revision of Greek culture of second wave feminists. However, Pfeiffer's revisionism may be seen to underline the cultural authority of Hellenism, while highlighting the absence of women from social, political and historical processes. In other words, Pfeiffer's fantasy of a feminised Hellas is exactly that, a fantasy. By transforming Greece into an ideological topos, Pfeiffer effectively ignores the ideological problems posed by Greek culture.

Unlike Shelley, who declined to visit Greece, since 'I had rather not have any more of my hopes and illusions mocked by sad realities', Pfeiffer was prepared to have her idealised vision of Hellas challenged by reality.[7] But what would Emily Pfeiffer find in the ruins of Athens? Would she find the traces of Athena's divine influence? Or would Athena prove to be absent; the empty cipher of a 'dead' language? In the winter of 1882, Emily and her husband J. Edward Pfeiffer set sail for the East.

To the East

The travelogues of many Victorian women are frequently described in terms of escape from the oppressive regimen of middle-class domesticity, but in

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6 Pfeiffer had clearly read Ruskin's essay *Queen of the Air* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1869), in which Ruskin redefined Athena as the creative principle or 'formative power' of nature. It is also highly likely that Pfeiffer had read Augusta Webster's poem 'Athens' from the volume *Blanche Lisle, and other Poems* (Cambridge, 1860).

7 Cited by Trelawny in, *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, 2nd edn (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1859), p. 86.

many ways Emily Pfeiffer was free from the demands of a conventional middle-class lifestyle. Despite an inauspicious family background, when Emily married Jürgen Edward Pfeiffer, a prosperous German merchant, she finally acquired the financial means and leisure time to educate herself. The Pfeiffers had no children and their considerable wealth afforded them a high level of comfort and independence. Aside from her household duties, Emily was therefore able to dedicate much of her time to her own interests and intellectual advancement. In Edward Pfeiffer, Emily seems to have chosen a partner who shared both her interests and beliefs. Edward not only encouraged his wife's literary and political activities, he was also a passionate supporter of the higher education of women. Furthermore, wealth enabled travel. Having made numerous trips to Europe and around the British Isles, the Pfeiffers elected to travel further abroad.

The first section of *Flying Leaves from East and West* is an account of the Pfeiffers' visit to Asia Minor. Significantly, Emily Pfeiffer chooses not to disclose her reasons for travel. The impetus for Pfeiffer's journey may have been deeply personal as Emily's younger sister, Caroline Rocca and her family, lived near the port of Smyrna in Asia Minor. How or why Caroline Rocca came to be living near Smyrna is unclear. What is clear is that Pfeiffer obfuscates her reasons for travel. In fact Pfeiffer tries to obscure the identities of her travel companions, referring to them as a capital letter; 'E—' for her husband Edward and 'C—' for her sister Caroline. Also, there are no pictures, photographs or sketches in *Flying Leaves*. Pfeiffer's evasive narratorial strategies suggest her acute awareness of discursive constraints concerning women's travel writing.[8] The effect of this deliberate obfuscation is that Pfeiffer's concerns and opinions become central and we are more likely to view her, despite the plural pronoun, as an independent, intrepid traveller. Furthermore, the narratorial distance enabled by such strategies allows for more direct political commentary.

For travellers in the nineteenth century, as Robert Peckham observes, a voyage to Greece was mediated through a canon of ancient texts which shaped whatever was written about the country.[9] A journey to Greece was also influenced by the wealth of contemporary textual and visual representations. Alongside poetic and dramatic constructions, the guidebooks of the period demonstrate the extent to which travel was inseparable from

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[8] For a more detailed discussion of discourse theory, see Michel Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1969, 1974) and, in relation to women's travel writing, see Sara Mills's *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[9] See Robert Shannan Peckham, 'Exoticism of the Familiar', in *Writes of Passage*, ed. by James Duncan & Derek Gregory (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 164- 84 (p. 172).

textual, interpretive processes. For instance, the fifth edition of Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Greece* suggests that the country is an ancient manuscript, laid open for the educated, middle-class British tourist to read and interpret: 'The aspect of Greece is that of the old manuscript; covered as it may be by many a palimpsest but it is only in proportion as the original is read that the value is felt'.[10] Of course, for female travellers it was (and is) vital to try to interpret the absences and silences regarding women in the Grecian 'manuscript'. In order to qualify her own classical and interpretive credentials, Pfeiffer lets it be known that she has read Homer, Plato and the ancient Greek dramatists, as well as the ancient travel writer, Pausanias. However, as Pfeiffer was not proficient in Greek, her knowledge of the ancient authors is mediated through the process of translation. Pfeiffer's journey to Hellas may therefore be seen as an exploration of a Greece that is both known and unknown.

Greece in the late nineteenth century was not the classical Hellas of antiquity, despite claims to the contrary. William Makepeace Thackeray, following his travels in Greece, described the country as, 'the most classical country in the world'.[11] Murray's *Handbook* suggested that Greece has 'no modern history of such a character as to obscure the vividness of her classical features'.[12] This kind of imperial nostalgia briefly colours Pfeiffer's narrative. Smyrna may well have been the birthplace of Homer (and the *Iliad*) in the second half of the eighth century B.C., and like a topographical guide, Pfeiffer notes that she can track the course of 'Homer's river'.[13] The Homeric heroes are, however, long since absent. Forced to abandon her sense of nostalgia, Pfeiffer observes that the inhabitants of Smyrna are not the familiar characters of Hellenic legend, but modern 'Greeks, Turks, Arabs, Albanians, negroes and Jews' (p. 4). The port has a decidedly Eastern character and its population is, to the visiting Pfeiffer, exotic and alien.

Flying Leaves is dominated by a procession of exotic female characters. Adopting a conventionally masculinist, colonial perspective, Pfeiffer is drawn to the veiled women that she meets in the Smyrnian bazaars. She finds the wealthy Turkish women, adorned by soft folds of 'feminine' muslin, strangely alluring. Yet, her reaction to 'a little party of Turkish dames possibly of a lower rank' (p. 14) is extreme, revealing a deep anxiety:

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10 Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Greece*, 5th edition (London: John Murray, 1884), p. 9.

11 William Makepeace Thackeray, *Notes on a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (Heathfield: Cockbird Press, 1844), p. 52.

12 Murray's *Handbook* (1872), p. 2.

13 Pfeiffer is probably referring to the river Meles. All subsequent references to *Flying Leaves from East and West* (London: Field & Tuer, 1885) will be cited in parentheses in the text.

> They are also muffled in the feringhee, and have on their faces the regulation yashmak, but not of white muslin. It is a veil thrown over the head, and worn under the head-dress, of which veil the ground colour is a beet-root red, variegated with a pattern in black and white. A hideous suggestion of tatooing is the result of this face gear, doubly hideous by reason of the sanguinary hue imparted to the countenance, and the lines of the pattern traversing those of the features. The women thus disguised have all the appearance of monsters. (p. 15)

Issues of class, consumerism, racism and feminism coalesce in this remarkable description. The more opaque veil poses a clear problem for Pfeiffer. On one level, the veil is a marker of racial difference and cultural oppression, which undermines the women's femininity and sense of identity. On another level, because the veil halts the penetrating gaze of the colonial subject, the lack of transparency is not only interpreted as a manifestation of the women's mysterious qualities, but also of Turkish tyranny. As Inderpal Grewal suggests, 'the veil and the harem were fascinating to European culture because they stood for the opacity that they believed marked what was radically different from Western culture. To remove these was to civilise'.[14] The Turkish women, 'of a lower rank', are represented by Pfeiffer as unassailably Other.

Pfeiffer's extreme response contrasts sharply with the reaction of other female travellers to the veil. Over a century earlier, for instance, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had suggested that the 'ferigée' provided Turkish women not only with freedom from masculine eyes, but also with the 'entire Liberty of following their Inclinations without danger of Discovery'.[15] Montagu describes the veil as physically and sexually liberating, a 'perpetual masquerade'. On a number of occasions during her residence in Turkey she describes donning the 'asmak' which, she says, has 'become not only very easy but agreeable to me'.[16] Yet Pfeiffer's imperial myopia causes her to disregard the perspective of the veiled woman. Unlike Montagu, she is unable and/or unwilling to appreciate the liberatory potential of being the looker, rather than the looked upon.[17]

The Turkish 'dames' briefly engage Pfeiffer and her sister in conversation, which 'C—' translates. In this 'foreign' land, Pfeiffer is unable to represent herself, so she must be represented. Significantly, the women speak to Pfeiffer and her sister in Greek. If, to Pfeiffer, the veil is a marker of incivility (if not dehumanisation), Greek language is clearly an indicator of

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[14] See Inderpal Grewal's important study, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 50.

[15] Mary Wortley Montagu, *Complete Letters*, ed. by Robert Halsband, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-67), I, 328.

[16] Montagu, I, 397.

[17] I borrow this phrase from Mary Louise Pratt. See Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992).

high culture and learning. Pfeiffer is spoken to in a language that she does not understand (but wishes she knew), yet she manages to retain her sense of imperiousness. She describes the encounter as, 'a pleasant little incident, one calculated to whet the appetite for further communication with these poor custom-bound sisters, survivals of a not yet foregone tyranny' (p. 16). As representatives of both the British and Ottoman empires, it is ironic that it is only through Greek that the women are able to forge a connection.

Pfeiffer's next opportunity for imperial gazing takes place in the harem of the ex-governor of Smyrna, Midhat Pasha. For a number of Victorian women travellers to the East, a visit to a harem was obligatory. As Foster and Mills point out, 'this cultural arena had become a trope for the Orient itself, an analogy for the desired unknown'. [18] Yet for female travellers, the harem was far from unfamiliar: 'a visit to a harem had become a regular part of the female tourist itinerary by the late 1840s and constituted a flourishing commercial venture by the 1870s, as is attested by Annie Jane Harvey's guide of 1871'.[19] A printed guide suggests that the harem was a space that could be definitively read and understood, according to a set of standardised assumptions. The harem was, however, a particularly complex cultural construction in which the discourses of imperialism, feminism, sexuality and racism converged and competed.

'A zone of evil'

In *Home and Harem*, Grewal suggests that discourses concerning Empire, race and nation often prove to be sites of enunciation for feminist subjects. For female travellers, the harem could be seen as a specific site of enunciation for their feminist views. Grewal argues that whereas 'for the European male, the harem symbolised mystery and allure as well as female subservience and unfreedom, for the Englishwomen the harem became an example of the consequence of the denial of freedom to women as well as the problem of inferior races'.[20] The harem could also stimulate thinking about the onlooker's own culture, as the harem and the bourgeois home could be seen as mutually constitutive. In *Flying Leaves*, Pfeiffer's account of her visit to Midhat Pasha's harem demonstrates that passionate beliefs in both British racial superiority and feminism are not mutually exclusive subject positions.

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[18] See Shirley Foster and Sara Mills, eds, *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 15.

[19] Foster and Mills, p. 15.

[20] Grewal, p. 82.

Perhaps the biggest marker of difference between British women and their Turkish counterparts was the issue of travel. In many nineteenth century accounts, travel is conceived as a reflection of modernity and social advancement.[21] The women of Midhat's harem do not travel, in contrast to the upwardly mobile Pfeiffer. That the women rarely cross the threshold of the harem is seen by Pfeiffer as a form of cultural and ethnic retardation. Indeed, Pfeiffer seems to be bound to the convention that travel is progressively transformative: 'I saw plainly that nothing could have got her to admit the revolutionary notion that women could go abroad, or dwell at home, otherwise than under the guard and tutelage of eunuchs. To have smuggled such an idea into her head, it would have been necessary to trepan her. As that was not to be thought of, I sat digesting my disappointment in silence' (p. 25). To 'trepan' can mean to entice and entrap; it can also refer to a surgical procedure in which an instrument is used to remove circular sections of the skull. Either way, Madam Midhat is highly resistant to Pfeiffer's attempt to smuggle her feminist agenda into the harem and into her head. Pfeiffer assumes that the women of the harem share her ambitions and aspirations. Moreover, Pfeiffer falsely positions herself as a fully enfranchised colonial subject, in opposition to her incarcerated Turkish 'sisters'. At one stage Madame Midhat in fact mistakes Pfeiffer and her companions for envoys of the British government. Pfeiffer 'assured her we were unattached and insignificant persons only travelling for our pleasure, and having no influence or special knowledge of our Government or its counsels' (p. 23). Pfeiffer's political insignificance does not, however, inhibit her sense of (racial) superiority. As Chandra Mohanty wryly observes, 'beyond sisterhood there are still racism, colonialism, and imperialism'.[22]

After further conversation with Madame Midhat, a frustrated Pfeiffer declares: 'the whole tale of the wicked and impotent old East rose before us in this picture, and at the moment we would gladly have set fire to that Turkish quarter, and have freed those poor captives stagnating within it' (pp. 26-27). The violence of this statement is extraordinary. At home, Pfeiffer was not a militant feminist engaged in violent actions. Yet, in this oriental context, Pfeiffer is able to position herself as a freedom fighter, battling against the oppression of the 'wicked' Turks. Consequently, we can see Pfeiffer strategically, if not cynically, deploy the racist and imperialist

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[21] For a more detailed analysis of travel and modernity see Caren Kaplan's *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996, 2000).

[22] Chandra Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practising Solidarity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 36.

prejudices surrounding the harem as a means of furthering her own political agenda at home.

Unable to identify with the seemingly inert Turkish women, Pfeiffer adopts a tone of moral superiority: 'It is their perverted womankind, grown feeble and corrupt in the close atmosphere of the harem, who are dragging and holding them down' (p. 19). The close, intimate environment of the harem was frequently associated with hyper-sexuality, polygamy and lesbianism.[23] For Pfeiffer, the harem amounts to 'a zone of evil', or the setting for negative behaviours counter to (and therefore underlining) Christian and inherently British values, such as marriage, abstinence and work.[24] Furthermore, the unemployed women of the harem are seen as a direct impediment to the social and cultural development of the Turks. Pfeiffer is unable to perceive the value of an entirely female space and she completely overlooks the subversive potential of the harem as a counterpoint to British conceptions of 'family' and the 'household'.

However, by depicting the Turkish women as 'perverted' and the British as morally superior, Pfeiffer loses the provocative analogy between the middle-class Victorian home and the harem. In comparison with the abject state of the Turkish women, British women were liable to read Pfeiffer's account and feel relatively liberated. Consequently, Pfeiffer reaches out to Madame Midhat and the women of the harem, in order to re-establish the case for female solidarity against patriarchal oppression: 'we thought this a not unfavourable opportunity to inquire if the Turkish ladies generally, and Madame Midhat in particular, did not desire and hope for some change in the condition of their lives. We were assured in answer that they did, but that there were many difficulties in the way' (p. 24). Rather than divided by racial and cultural differences, the women are perceived to be united by their struggles for social and political freedom. Of course, Pfeiffer's feminist project cannot be easily divested from her imperial subjectivity. Her attempt to export a trans-national feminist agenda must be seen in context with Britain's political movements in Eastern Europe.

Throughout the nineteenth century, as Peckham observes, Greece was conceived as a borderland, as 'both as the source of Hellenism and as a vital geopolitical space in the establishment of a European bulwark against the encroaching East'.[25] Furthermore, as Bastéa suggests, 'many Greek politicians and intellectuals in the nineteenth century believed that the political mission of Greece was to act as a conduit, receiving the light of

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[23] See Malek Alloula's description of the harem in *The Colonial Harem*, trans. by Myrna Godzich & Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

[24] I borrow the phrase 'zone of evil' from Grewal, p. 51.

[25] Peckham, p. 167.

Western civilisation and transmitting it to the East'.[26] If Greece was the geographical bulwark, then Hellenism was the ideological battleground. In England, however, Hellenism was a highly contested heterogeneous discourse. For women and ethnic minorities, Greek values fostered socio-political exclusion, not 'democracy'. It is therefore in Athens, at the seat of 'democracy' and not the harem, where Pfeiffer's identity as a feminist subject is most fully realised.

'Your coming seems rather a return'

At the time of Pfeiffer's visit, Athens was no Romantic idyll. Gone were the sublime lines (if they ever truly existed) of Stuart and Revett and the picturesque pre-Revolutionary landscapes of the Romantic painters. In their place, were new buildings and civic works.[27] *Flying Leaves* makes no reference to the contemporary buildings and Greece's drive toward modernisation. Pfeiffer was not, however, the only visitor to omit such significant details. Bastéa points out that many travellers were reluctant to describe the state of flux and instability that characterised the 'new' nation. 'As modern Greece struggled to define its role in modern Europe, shedding first its picturesque Ottoman and then its rugged revolutionary image, it lost that special place it had held in the hearts of many European travellers and politicians'.[28] British travellers wanted to find Athens to be both a thriving, 'modern' European city and a shrine to Greece's ancient past. Pfeiffer for one is particularly interested in the relics of the ancient past and the impact of Greek culture on the present.

There is a marked change in the narrative structure of *Flying Leaves*, from Asia Minor to Greece. Whereas the earlier narrative highlighted her mobility and movement, Pfeiffer's account of her time in Athens suggests permanence and fixity. In contrast to the Turkish dwellings and the harems of Asia Minor, Pfeiffer suggests that in Athens she feels 'so much at home': 'Pictures, painted and verbal, have for once done their work with due effect, since nothing seems strange or wholly unexpected. Your coming seems rather a return; in any case you have arrived, you are not *parvenu*' (p. 40). This statement is a testament to the ideological power of British Hellenism.

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[26] Eleni Bastéa, 'Nineteenth-century Travellers in Greek Lands: Politics, Prejudice and Poetry in Arcadia', *Dialogos*, 4 (1997), 47-69 (p. 54).

[27] For instance, the British School at Athens was completed in 1886, following a suggestion by Professor Richard Jebb, after the French and American schools had already been established.

[28] Bastéa, p. 56.

Despite the lack of a direct colonial relationship with Greece, Pfeiffer experiences no sense of estrangement or alienation. Her sense of familiarity only seems to confirm her belief, established in the poem 'Hellas', in the British as the rightful ancestors of the ancient Greeks. Furthermore, Pfeiffer's comment suggests how tourism constructs 'authentic' locations and experiences. Yet, it is in this homely location that Pfeiffer will come to feel a most acute sense of exclusion and estrangement.

In a nice twist of convention, Pfeiffer describes leaving her 'invalid' husband in their hotel room, recovering from a bad cold, whilst she takes herself off to the Acropolis. Despite her claims of 'familiarity', Pfeiffer is undoubtedly impressed by the ancient buildings of the Acropolis. To Pfeiffer, like so many before her, the Acropolis 'haunts the city and the region round about […] with a spell like the compelling impulse which forces us to gaze upon the setting sun' (p. 39). Pfeiffer's description recalls Byron's famous line from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: 'Where 'er we tread, / 'tis haunted, holy ground'.[29] Cultural haunting and reverential worship are central to Pfeiffer's interpretation of the Acropolis. Indeed, the Parthenon and its environs are described as 'sacred precincts' and 'the object of all worship' (p. 42). The Parthenon is represented as the cult object of Hellenism and Hellenism is envisaged as the 'religion' of civilisation.

Aware of her own role in representing the Parthenon for a contemporary audience, Pfeiffer observes: 'It has so often been urged of late that no building could possibly bear the strain of so much greatness, the weight of such immortal memories, such immoderate expectation, as hangs about the Parthenon, that the traveller of to-day is perhaps liable to approach it with hopes unnaturally subdued' (p. 42). Pfeiffer tells us, 'I was prepared to find the monument of small proportions'. But as she approaches the Parthenon she becomes fully aware of the structure's 'magnificent mass', of its significance as a cultural and political symbol.

A number of travellers to Athens describe being overwrought by their visit to the Acropolis. One such visitor was Sigmund Freud who, when he finally reached the Parthenon, noted, 'seeing something with one's own eyes is after all quite a different thing from hearing or reading about it'. He was compelled to conclude that, 'it really does exist'. Freud's open-letter, 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis', describes his experience of an Oedipal conflict, in the 'after-effect' of visiting the famous structure: 'There was something about it that was wrong, that from earliest times had been

[29] Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto II, st.88.

forbidden'.[30] Freud comes to the conclusion that what interfered with his enjoyment of 'the journey to Athens' was a feeling of filial piety, that it was 'something to do with the child's criticism of the father'.[31] For Freud, the journey to Athens and the Parthenon in particular, was the culmination of his intellectual and aesthetic education. He had reached a place, geographically and educationally, that his father had been unable to attain.

Keith Hanley suggests that the Acropolis might be seen as a symbol of the father, of 'the whole empowering system of signification'.[32] Pfeiffer shares with Freud the notion that the Parthenon is an icon, a symbol of cultural power and prestige.[33] However, unlike Freud, Emily Pfeiffer is enthusiastically critical of patriarchy. Whereas Freud envisages his journey as a metaphorical return to the father, Pfeiffer's journey to Athens may be seen as a return to the origins of sexual difference. Where the Parthenon evokes a feeling of repression in Freud, the monument engenders a sense of oppression in Pfeiffer.

Pfeiffer positions herself (subserviently) beneath the monument, in order to contemplate the 'penetrating influence' of the Parthenon's partially erect columns: 'When I had settled down to its contemplation, silent and passive to its gradually penetrating influence, it ceased for me to be great or small, high or low, but stood there in pathetic ruin, glowing upon the azure sky, a golden temple, model and architype [*sic*] in the severity of its perfect idea, of all the temples that ever where or shall be' (pp. 42-43). The luminosity of the marble temple recalls the opacity of the harem and the dark days of Ottoman rule. Despite, or perhaps because of, its ruined state, the Parthenon still manages to shine as a symbol of 'democracy' and civilisation. Yet, Pfeiffer is subtly critical of the 'severe' aesthetic and ideological values of the Greeks, as represented by the monument. Indeed, the ruined condition of the structure suggests the erosion, if not the failure, of ancient Greek ideals.

Fragments constantly allude to the context to which they once belonged. Reflection upon a fragment also reveals, as Lagerlöf suggests, 'a predicament of a higher order: of never being within the whole upon which we are

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30 Sigmund Freud, 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis', in *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London, 1953-74), vol. 22, pp. 239-48 (p. 244).

31 Freud, p. 247.

32 Keith Hanley, 'Wordsworth's Grand Tour,' in *Romantic Geographies*, ed. by Amanda Gilroy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 71-92 (p. 71).

33 As Mary Beard observes, 'it is reckoned that by the mid-nineteenth century there was hardly a sizeable town in Europe or North America that did not somewhere possess the cast of at least one of Elgin's marbles.' See Mary Beard's *The Parthenon* (London: Profile Books, 2002, 2004) for a more detailed discussion of the social, historical and political issues concerning the monument, p. 18.

reflecting, of remaining forever outside, observing and deciphering enigmatic and elusive hints instead of participating genuinely in a manifest taken-for-granted world'.[34] As she sits contemplating the fragmented structure before her, Pfeiffer is unable to resist the desire for inclusivity and participation. Adopting a kind of Platonic approach, [35] Pfeiffer suggests that the fragmented monument intimates a transcendental reality outside itself, which she is able to decipher:

> Then for a moment the scorns of time and the crueller wrong of the spoiler were repaired: it had become a temple of the mind, as the spirit seemed to rise above the object of sense, and to follow the fluted columns to that point in the depths of space to which their lines are said to converge. […] the Reason which had here found so visible a throne still cried aloud from the stones, and it was a deep joy to feel that you were of those who, however imperfectly, could hear its voice. (p. 43)

Pfeiffer's imaginative re-creation of the Parthenon momentarily grants her participation in the male-dominated discourses of aesthetics and philosophy. The rational, reasoning processes which produced the Parthenon were, however, gendered male. Pfeiffer's 'deep joy' does not last as she knows that the idealised aesthetic object cannot be separated from ideological and ethical issues. Indeed, what emerges from the Parthenon and its sculptures is, for Pfeiffer, an ethics and aesthetics of sexual difference and a politics of exclusion.

The decision to build the Parthenon was taken by the Athenian assembly, on the instigation of the Greek statesman Pericles. As many critics have illustrated, the structure can be seen to reflect the social, political, aesthetic and religious beliefs of the ancient Athenians. The culture that produced the Parthenon was (even by ancient standards) peculiarly androcentric. However, femininity is a fundamental component of the Parthenon. The temple was built, in part, to honour the goddess Athena. It is she who gives the Parthenon, as well as the Athenian *polis*, its name. In *Lectures in the Philosophy of History*, Hegel envisages the goddess as the representative of the Athenian *polis*: 'Athena the goddess is Athens itself – i.e., the real and concrete spirit of the citizens'.[36] Likewise, as Pfeiffer indicates in the poem

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[34] Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf, *The Sculptures of the Parthenon: Aesthetics and Interpretation* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 117.

[35] For a more detailed discussion on Plato's views of the visible in relation to the Parthenon see Lagerlöf, p. 119.

[36] See Hegel, *Lectures in the Philosophy of History*, trans., J. Sibree (New York, 1956), p. 252. However, in *The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship & the Division Between the Sexes*, trans. by Caroline Levine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Nicole Loraux cautions us against Hegel's over-determined interpretation of Athena.

'Hellas', Athena is central to an understanding of the Parthenon and the Parthenon is central to understanding Athens.

Athena is an incredibly powerful figure, especially for women. A warrior with the face of a Gorgon on her breast, Athena not only demands reverence, she has the potential to strike fear in the male onlooker. She is also a highly transgressive figure who crosses gender boundaries and is closely associated with men. According to *A Description of Greece*, by the ancient Greek travel-writer Pausanias, a huge ivory and gold statue of Athena once stood in the East chamber of the Parthenon.[37] Pausanias notes that at the feet of the virgin goddess lies a snake, 'who would be Erichthonios', and, 'sculpted on the base of the statue is the birth of Pandora' (1.24.7). As Mary Beard points out, Pausanias ignores the architectural features of the Parthenon, preferring to relate the details of this rather kitsch and elaborate statue instead. As a tourist in Athens, Pausanias must therefore have felt that the statue was of particular importance, in terms of Athenian identity politics.

The myth of Erichthonios details the mythological origins of the first Athenian. According to one version of the myth, Erichthonios was born from the earth after the sperm of the artisan-god Hephaestus, dripped from the Athena's leg and onto fertile soil. Henceforth Athenian citizens could claim to be truly indigenous to their city and to have divine origins that bypassed human maternity. Pandora, the first human woman of the 'race of women', (who, incidentally, was born wearing a veil) was said to have been crafted by Zeus and sent as a curse for Prometheus's transgressions against the gods.[38] As Loraux suggests, 'it is not insignificant for us that the first Athenian and the first woman, an apparently asymmetrical couple, occupy the same place on the Acropolis in Athens, at the feet of the goddess and under her protection'.[39] The myths of Erichthonios and Pandora can be seen to reinforce the notion of sexual asymmetry, as an integral feature of the Athenian *polis*. Moreover, the myth of Athenian autochthony constitutes a denial of women. From the outset, women are excluded from the founding of Athens as well as from the procreation of the first Athenian. As Loraux observes, 'democracy is grafted onto autochthony'.[40]

Having read Pausanias in some detail, Pfeiffer knows that the Parthenon was built in honour of Athena who is effectively dispossessed in her role as the founder of Athens by the civic myth of autochthony. She notes: 'the statue of the great goddess was no longer in its place; its ivory had become dust, its gold had probably been coined, and, stamped with some baser

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37 The statue of Athena was lost in antiquity without trace.

38 The myth of Pandora is explicated by Hesiod in the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.

39 Loraux, p. 114.

40 Loraux, p. 50.

earthly image, had been passed from hand to hand' (p. 43). The feminine presence, at the heart of Athenian culture, has been debased and destroyed. The absent statue of Athena, suggests to Pfeiffer the repeated absence of women from full socio-political representation.

As a fragmented structure, the building itself suggests absence. But, at the time of Pfeiffer's visit, the Parthenon is not without a strong feminine presence:

> If Time has its revenges, History has its bitter irony […]. In these precincts, consecrated to the purest worship known to the Athenian world, the Turk installed his harem, and fouled the wholesome spring enshrined within it by foetid droppings from the sullen pool which gathers about the stagnant life of slaves. It might seem that the womanhood which, in its free strength and affectional impulse, had no accredited place in the Athenian polity, had avenged itself by coming to life among these ruins in some lower serpent form (pp. 43-44).

The symbolism of the Parthenon both enables and disables Pfeiffer's feminist argument; Athena is absent, but the disenfranchised Turkish women are disturbingly evident. The juxtaposition of the harem within the Parthenon is symbolically suggestive. The harem not only recalls the painful years of Ottoman rule and the ambiguous identity of modern Greece, but also the failures of ancient Greek democracy. In part, the Parthenon was designed to signify the triumphs of the 'democratic' Greeks over the 'barbaric' Persians. For Pfeiffer, however, the harem is a reminder that the ancient Greeks were a slave-owning society, which did not recognise the social, political and economic rights of women. 'The Attic love of liberty', Pfeiffer observes, 'accommodated itself perfectly with the institution of slavery for a moiety of mankind, and the permanent subjection of its less militant half' (p. 60). Pfeiffer reminds us that in a male-dominated society like Classical Athens, gender was an organising principle. Indeed, Pfeiffer seems to anticipate the work of Nicole Loraux who suggests that, 'there is no first Athenian woman; there is not, and never has been, a real female Athenian. The political process does not recognise a "citizeness," the language has no word for a woman from Athens'.[41] Consequently, in no way can Greek (European) values be considered morally superior to those of the Turks. By their very *presence* in the symbolically loaded space of the Parthenon, the Turkish women can be seen to avenge the *absence* of womankind from social, political and aesthetic discourses. Ultimately, Pfeiffer suggests that aesthetic judgements should be informed by ethical considerations. Yet, at the same time, Pfeiffer's own ethical observations are infused with racist and imperialist prejudices that cannot be ignored.

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[41] Loraux, p. 10.

In *Flying Leaves* Pfeiffer's physical exploration of Athens begins and ends with the Parthenon. That is not to say that Pfeiffer's engagement or confrontation with Greek culture comes to an end. Pfeiffer redirects her narrative to the literary productions of the ancient Greeks in order to re-examine the issues, such as gender, power and citizenship, raised by her reading of the Acropolis. In so doing, Pfeiffer effectively transforms her travelogue into a philosophic and political treatise. Reading ancient texts *in situ* was supposed to provide new insights, new revelations, for the educated traveller. For instance, Murray's *Handbook* declared that 'Greek authors acquire new and clearer meanings read by the light of Greek scenery and topography'.[42] In Athens, Emily Pfeiffer certainly seems to gain a new understanding of Platonic philosophy:[43]

> Reading on the spot in Plato's 'Republic' what has been said in relation to woman by one who was of the noblest of Athenian citizens, one is led to confess to the severe logic which has directed his conclusions from the premise of such an initial conception. The Athenian world, more than that of its neighbour States, still more than that of some other ancient peoples, was a world without woman in any true sense. (p. 59)

Perhaps the most famous exposition of archaic 'feminism' is recorded in Book V of Plato's *Republic*. As part of his ideal state, Plato proposes that there should be equality amongst the governing elite, which, extraordinarily, was to include women. Plato's ideal state would not therefore be a 'world without women', but would ascribe women civic status. As a campaigner for women's rights it seems incredible that Pfeiffer should object to Plato's provocative egalitarianism. However, Plato's texts suggest contradictory attitudes toward women that can be described as proto-feminist and misogynist in turn. Pfeiffer, for her part, interprets Plato's philosophic dialogues, not in terms of transcendentalism, but as texts which sustain and maintain gender difference:

> How instructive is the whole of that fifth book of the "Republic" which treats of the "Education of Women"! – what a light it lets in on the history and tendency of Greek thought! It is the masculine spirit working alone that we trace in this portion of the

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42 Murray's *Handbook* (1896), xxix.

43 One must also consider which version of the *Republic* Pfeiffer was reading in Athens. As she was unable to read Greek in the original, it is likely that she was reading one of the popular contemporary translations of Plato's dialogues. Nathalie Bluestone suggests that a number of eminent Victorian scholars/translators like Benjamin Jowett, Richard Nettleship and Francis Cornford, tried to square the Platonic proposals for equality between the sexes with contemporary English morality and social convention. As a result, Pfeiffer may have been reading a version of the *Republic* which deliberately downplayed Plato's proposals for sexual equality. See Natalie Harris Bluestone, *Women and the Ideal Society: Plato's Republic and Modern Myths of Gender* (Oxford: Berg, 1987).

> wonderful Utopia – the Babel Tower whose malarious ruins are still to be found in Constantinople and elsewhere under the rule of the Turk. Was ever an outrage so callous perpetrated upon the human affections as that advocated in this book of the divine Plato? (p. 65)

In order to bring about his ideal state Plato proposed to abolish the family. This radical idea was not however, conceived in terms of sexual equality. As Susan Moller Okin reminds us, 'neither equality nor liberty nor justice in the sense of fairness were values for Plato'.[44] Further, 'women are classified by Plato, as they were by the culture in which he lived, as an important subsection of property'.[45] Thus, by eradicating the traditional family unit, women and their children would become the collective property of the male civic elite in Plato's ideal state. Pfeiffer is understandably outraged as the philosopher makes his radical suggestions not on the basis of equality and justice, but on the basis of patriarchal dominance. Pfeiffer is therefore able to draw a comparison between Plato's suggestions of communal living, with the harems of the Ottoman Empire.

The focus of Pfeiffer's attack is the issue of patrilineal inheritance and the exclusion of women from socio-political processes, such as citizenship. Pfeiffer is keen to contest and resist Plato's conclusions precisely because his ideas were seen as central to the cultural regeneration of Victorian Britain. Jenkyns points out that for many reformers and politicians of the late nineteenth century, 'in Plato they found an ancient author who seemed to be joining in the debate with the newest, most stimulating thinkers of their time'.[46] The long since dead Plato was a very well travelled (and well-received) theorist. The philosophy of Plato may be seen as a reverse example of how 'colonisation may occur at the level of narrative and imagination'.[47]

In order to resist Platonic doctrine, Pfeiffer attempts to restore the geographical and temporal distance between her own time and that of the ancient Greeks:

> When I read and mark these things, I turn from the wisdom of Greece; it has become to me foolishness. I turn from the Acropolis, where stands the golden Parthenon, trembling as of its own beauty upon the palpitating ether; I look away from it, and the system which within it and around, has reached its fullest expansion. I seek a wisdom higher and more fruitful than the unmated Reason: the wisdom that is justified of her children. I aspire to equal justice, I look for unbounded liberty (pp. 65-66).

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44 Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 28.

45 Okin, p. 31.

46 Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 247.

47 See Kristi Siegel's Introduction to *Issues in Travel Writing*, p. 3.

Pfeiffer's initial feelings upon reaching Athens, of homeliness and belonging were clearly misplaced. Upon reflection, Pfeiffer now feels a distinct feeling of exclusion and estrangement. In the face of Greek androcentrism Pfeiffer is compelled to disinherit herself from the Hellenic tradition. From Pfeiffer's altered/marginalised perspective, Hellenism can no longer be considered as an appropriate cultural model for the British Empire, as the discourse threatens to re-inscribe the misogynist beliefs and practices of the ancient Greeks. However, Pfeiffer's conception of 'unbounded liberty' is in fact heavily mediated by contemporary debates concerning class and race. Whilst Pfeiffer's journey to Greece challenged her preconceptions and enlivened her feminism, her travels east also reinforced her belief in British racial and moral superiority.

In the autumn of 1884, Pfeiffer and her husband began their journey west, to the 'New World' of the United Sates of America. Although impressed by the material and economic prosperity of the Americans, Pfeiffer adopts a condescendingly Eurocentric position. Rather like Plato, Pfeiffer in fact demonstrates a distinct hostility to the principles of democracy. Indeed, Pfeiffer's response to her encounter with a group of 'unwashed, unchanged and unkempt men and boys' is astoundingly hypocritical and prejudicial: 'we look democracy for the first time in the face; and whatever may be its merits, they are hardly of a nature to provoke love at first sight' (p. 86). If social equality is unpalatable to Pfeiffer, the multicultural make-up of America is downright disturbing:

> In this hotel the waiters are white, but the negroes we see abroad, servants, and more particularly coachmen, are far removed in aspect from the thick-lipped, flat-nosed race I had expected to meet. Their noses have mostly got, or are on the way to get bridges; and bridge to a nose, like a high road in a new country, is an element of progress. One or two I have seen, as black almost as sloes, and with wool upon the head as dense as that of sheep, who had this feature quite in an advanced state of development; and a young girl in a graceful hat and feathers was an accomplished American beauty, looked at through a sable veil; but this last was, I confess, an exception. What is this alchemy of climate or conditions which so acts upon the human subject? (p. 82)

Pfeiffer attempts to couch her racism in the discourses of ethnography and anthropology. Her racism is, however, profoundly unempirical. Without irony she observes, 'the claim that all American citizens are equal it is impossible to entertain in the face of patent facts' (p. 80). In the *Republic*, Plato suggests that only Athenian citizens, the elite of Athens, are free to enjoy social and political freedoms. Pfeiffer's conception of social equality

and justice is similarly ridden with a fear of diversity. Only for Pfeiffer the elite includes educated women like herself.

Despite the explosions, neglect and vandalism, the monuments of ancient Athens remain, for the most part, standing. History has not been so kind to Emily Pfeiffer. Pfeiffer was not lost in the Levant, or left stranded in the mountains of the Peloponnese, but for over a hundred years she was lost to literary history.[48] Yet, as *Flying Leaves* demonstrates, Pfeiffer is a writer of remarkable range and sophistication. She is also a writer who reflects the social and political issues and prejudices of her time. *Flying Leaves from East and West* is a complex cultural document, not least because it captures cultures, specifically those of Greece and America, and Pfeiffer herself, undergoing a process of transition. Paradoxically, Pfeiffer's journeys destabilised and confirmed her feminist identity and her nationalist and imperial subjectivity. If ancient Greece was a world without woman in any true sense, Emily Pfeiffer was determined that Victorian Britain would acknowledge women as independent intellectual and political beings. The travelogue of this extraordinary Victorian woman may be seen as a significant contribution to that end.

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[48] As Kathleen Hickok put it in a recent article, 'Why is This Woman Still Missing? Emily Pfeiffer, Victorian Poet', in *Women's Poetry, Late Romantic to Late Victorian: Gender and Genre, 1830-1900,* ed. by Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 373-89.

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Martha Klironomos

British Women Travellers to Greece, 1880-1930

Abstract

This essay considers narratives published by British women who travelled to Greece in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries (including scholars, writers and artists such as Jane Ellen Harrison, Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Russell Barrington, Agnes Conway, and Ethel Smyth), with a view to revealing a hitherto unexplored facet of the production of knowledge about Greece, both ancient and modern, extending beyond the confines of academic and philological work to embrace popular writing and other related arts. These accounts can loosely be divided into two categories: the first group, termed here as the 'archaeological-topographical', presents views on the topographical authenticity of Greece with particular emphasis placed on the significance of ancient sites and monuments; the second group, termed the 'sociological-anthropological', deals with impressions of the social specificity of the Greeks, reflecting the changing zones of contact between the two nations through British-guest and Greek-host relations. Influenced by the discourse of Victorian Hellenism, the narratives reveal aspects of a particular model of British national identity that affirms the concept of self on an exclusive claim to the ancient Greek past and deems the modern Greek subject as cultural *other*.

This essay surveys a group of narratives published by British women who travelled to Greece in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries and places them within a larger social, historical and cultural context that afforded opportunities for travel to women.[1] Hailing from varying backgrounds, the travellers discussed here include upper class women of leisure and spouses of diplomats, a category of narrators that continues the tradition of travel writing to Greece set in earlier epochs that featured impressions of ancient and/or modern sites and inhabitants.[2] Yet we also see in this period a broadening base of female narrators that comprise academics and lay persons alike – archaeologists and anthropologists as well as authors,

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1 A revised and shorter version of this essay, based on a conference presentation which discusses Virginia Woolf in the context of this group of British women travellers, has been published in a cluster of selected papers from the 15th Annual Virginia Woolf Conference held at the College of Lewis and Clark, June 9-12, 2005. See Martha Klironomos, 'Early Twentieth-Century British Women Travellers to Greece: Contextualizing the Example of Virginia Woolf', *Literature Compass*, 4.2 (2007), 473-85, doi:10.1111/j.1741 - 4113.2006.00401.x

2 See Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, *The Eve of the Greek Revival: British Travellers' Perceptions of Early Nineteenth-Century Greece* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

artists and photographers, reflecting the rise of an educated class and increasing aspirations of professionalism among British women.

The women travellers surveyed in this essay advance a literary tradition of travel writing that had already been established in the period of the European Grand Tour, authored by and directed at the more privileged segments of European society by generations of visitors to Greece spanning the period from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries.[3] By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, we distinctly see forerunners of the modern guidebook and travel essay, which now were becoming more inclusive in their readership and also were aimed at the middle-class. As such, this survey also reveals a hitherto unexplored facet of the production of knowledge about Greece, both ancient and modern, which extends beyond the confines of academic and philological work and embraces popular writing and other related arts.

Taken collectively, these travel narratives reveal aspects of British national identity already firmly ensconced in the discourse of Victorian Hellenism in its affirmation of the British self – the definition of which was based on its exclusive claim to be the modern reincarnation of the ancient Greek past. These travel narratives, moreover, can loosely be grouped into two categories, although the boundaries between them are often blurred; the first group, termed here as the 'archaeological-topographical', present the 'topographical authenticity' of Greece with particular emphasis placed on the significance of ancient sites and monuments; the second group, termed the 'sociological-anthropological', deals with the 'social specificity'[4] of the Greeks and reflects the evolving and changing zones of contact between nations that surface in British-guest and Greek-host relations. In surveying the broad base of female narrators within the 'archaeological-topographical' group, I initially focus on what underlies their idealised pursuit of Greece: a

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[3] See Angelomatis-Tsougarakis (1990), Fani-Maria Tsigakou, *The Rediscovery of Greece: Travellers and Painters of the Romantic Era* (New Rochelle, New York: Caratzas Brothers, 1981), David Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Robert Eisner, *Travelers to an Antique Land: The History and Literature of Travel to Greece* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1991) and Olga Augustinos, *French Odysseys: Greece in French Travel Literature from the Renaissance to the Romantic Era* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins Press, 1994).

[4] I borrow the terms 'topographical authenticity' and 'social specificity' from Timothy Webb. See his essay 'Romantic Hellenism' in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 148-76 (p.158, n.11 and p. 157). See also Artemis Leontis, *Topographies of Hellenism: Mapping the Homeland* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), an extensive discussion of the Helladic *topos* in Greek, other European and Anglo-American modernisms.

grappling with deeper issues of historical consciousness, continuity and cultural entitlement. I then move on to discuss several examples of the 'sociological-anthropological' travel writings, which include ethnographical accounts and varying assessments of the modern inhabitants of Greece, who are often treated as a cultural other.

Archaeological-Topographical Travel

The narratives of those British women travellers that comprise the 'archaeological-topographical' model, exemplify a mode of historical experiencing that deviates from the sources that shaped the pre-Victorian intellectual imagining of Greece. Among a number of factors that afforded travel opportunities to women in this period, and especially among them a group of academic women, was the impetus sparked by recent archaeological activity. During the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, classical scholars and historians based their assessment of ancient Hellenic culture on existing literary texts, sculpture, and coins; the intellectual landscape had become altered, however, by the last three decades of the century as interest in Greece had been influenced by the fruits of archaeological excavation and research and the positing, in turn, of modernised analytical methodologies that paved the road towards professionalism.[5] Archaeologists theorised on the meaning of these recently unearthed ancient fragments to which they had tried to ascribe a myriad of holistic interpretations.[6]

Jane Ellen Harrison is a forerunner among British scholars' pursuit of knowledge about ancient Greece. Accounts of her travels to Greece in her memoir, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (1925), illustrate how in the fields of anthropology and archaeology, new opportunities were being opened to women. Her travels to ancient sites during the 1880s can initially be framed within the transition in classical scholarship that did not solely rely upon texts for its interpretation of antiquity and included the analysis of newly discovered empirical data, fuelled by the recent findings of Heinrich

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5 Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 115.

6 For a history of archaeology as a discipline see Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). On the specificity of ancient Greek archaeology, see Ian Morris, ed., *Classical Greece: Ancient Histories and Modern Anthropologies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Recent studies that address the issue of fragmentation in archaeology include John Chapman, *Fragmentation in Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2000) and Susan Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscapes, Monuments and Memories* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Schliemann and Sir Arthur Evans. Harrison notes the shift in methodologies that underscored classical and anthropological scholarship on ancient Hellenic art and monuments, within which her own contribution may be readily understood:

> Greek literature as a specialism I early felt was barred to me. The only field of research that the Cambridge of my day knew was textual criticism [...] We Hellenists were, in truth, at that time a 'people who sat in darkness', but we were soon to see a great light, two great lights – archaeology, anthropology [...] I had just left Cambridge when Schliemann began to dig at Troy. Among my own contemporaries was J.G. Frazer, who was soon to light the dark wood of savage superstition with a gleam from *The Golden Bough* [...] They saw in comparative anthropology a serious subject actually capable of elucidating a Greek or Latin text. Tylor had written and spoken; Robertson Smith, exiled for heresy, had seen the Star in the East [...] but at the mere sound of the magical words 'Golden Bough' the scales fell – we heard and understood. Then Arthur Evans set sail for his new Atlantis and telegraphed news of the Minotaur from his own labyrinth; perforce we saw this was a serious matter, it affected the 'Homeric Question'.[7]

Harrison's own work aptly charts the shift in these trends. A member of what was to become the Cambridge 'ritual' school, Harrison was a prolific author of an array of studies on ancient art. In an early work, *Introductory Studies in Greek Art* (1885), she argues the humanist's aesthetic idealisation of art, which drew inspiration from Plato's philosophy, reflective of the tradition paved by Johann Joachim Winckelmann and advanced by Joshua Reynolds. Her later work on ritual, however, reflected in such studies as *Art and Ritual*, emphasises a historical-experiential interpretation of Hellenism best understood in view of Bergsonian *durée*.[8] Through recent strides in archaeological recovery and the analysis of ritual and myth espoused by Edward B. Tylor, George Frazer, Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud,[9] Harrison went on to ground residual traces of archaic religious practice in modern forms of expression: to argue the case for continuity of shared collective experience across the ages.

In her glorification of antiquity, through reference to the ancient monument in her narrated travel experiences, Harrison refers to 'Greece' as a site to recall and revive ancient ritual practice and fertility rites, serving as an important antecedent for Christian symbolism and modern religious

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7 Jane Ellen Harrison, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (London: Hogarth Press, 1925, reprinted 1926), pp. 82-83. See Turner, p. 115.

8 Harrison interprets ancient Greek ritual in terms of *durée* in her memoir: 'A ritual dance, a ritual procession with vestments and lights and banners, move me as no sermon, no hymn, no picture, no Poem has ever moved me; perhaps it is because a procession seems to me like life, like *durée* itself, caught and fixed before me' (Harrison, p. 84).

9 Turner, pp. 53-55.

consciousness, as she points out in her memoir.[10] Her interest in ancient ritual as a form of historical experiencing and its link to modern forms of religious practice converge, for example, in her discussion of the significance of a bear fragment she discovers in the Acropolis museum.[11] After linking it to rituals associated with Artemis Brauronia, observed by Athenian girls in antiquity, she draws parallels to customs upheld in more recent memory, as those by the Apaches.[12]

Theorising on the nature and meaning of the fragments and the interpretive issues these present to the modern scholar was a question that earlier had preoccupied Victorian academics, such as John Pentland Mahaffy, the Trinity classicist, who writes about his visit to the Acropolis museum in 1875 in his travelogue *Rambles and Studies in Greece* (1876):

> Almost every traveller sees [the Athenian museums] after passing through Italy, where everything – where even too much – has been done to make the relics of antiquity perfect and complete. Missing noses, and arms, and feet have been restored; probable or possible names have been assigned to every statue; they are set up, generally, in handsome galleries, with suitable decoration; the visitor is provided with full descriptive catalogues. Nothing of all this however is found in Greece. The fragments are not sorted or arranged: many of the mutilated statues are lying prostrate, and of course in no way restored [...]. [E]very patient observer who sets to work in spite of his disappointment, and examines with honest care these 'disjecta membra' of Attic art—anyone who will replace in imagination the tips of noses – anyone who will stoop over lying statues, and guess at the context of broken limbs – any such observer will find his vexation gradually changing into wonder, and will, at last, come to see that all the splendidly-restored Greek work in Italian museums is not worth a

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[10] An example can be found in Harrison's drawing of parallels between Greek pagan and Orthodox religious rituals: 'The ritual dance is all but dead, but the ritual drama, the death and the resurrection of the Year-Spirit, still goes on. I realised this when I first heard Mass celebrated according to the Russian, that is substantially the Greek rite. There you have real enactment of a mystery – the mystery of the death and resurrection of the Year-Spirit which preceded drama. It is hidden, out of sight; the priest comes out from behind the golden gate to announce the accomplishment. It is the coming out of the Messenger in a Greek play to announce the Death and the Resurrection' (Harrison, p. 86).

[11] Harrison discusses the fragment's significance in her memoir: 'I was turning over the fragments in the Acropolis Museum […] [and] I lighted on the small stone figure of a […] she-bear […]. She must have been set up originally in the precinct of Artemis Brauronia. Within this precinct, year by year, went on the *arkteia* or bear service. No well-born Athenian would marry a girl unless she had accomplished her *bear-service*, unless she was, in a word, *confirmed* to Artemis. In the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes the chorus of women chant of the benefits they have received from the state, and the sacred acts they had accomplished before they came to maturity, and say, "I, wearing a saffron robe, was a bear at the Brauronian festival"" (emphasis in the original; Harrison, pp.70-71).

[12] Harrison, p. 71.

> tithe of the shattered fragments in the real home and citadel of pure art. This is especially true of the museum of the Acropolis.[13]

Mahaffy is resistant to the holistic reading of the past; he prefers the 'shattered fragments' to serve as raw data, to remain undisturbed, and not be subjected to any intervention or mediation. His stance signals a unique moment in the interpretation of the past by the modern perceiving subject. Mahaffy illustrates how a whole understanding of the ancient past underlying the discourses of British and European Hellenisms from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries was actually founded upon the reading of fragments – be it unearthed marbles resulting from an archaeological excavation, rediscovered papyri, and/or models of philological exegesis which were based on re-ascribing holistic interpretations to ancient fragments.[14]

But at the same time, the fragments also served as the very historical data upon which academics based their national identity, both in relation to its origin and claim to continuity.[15] Moreover, although the discourse of European Hellenism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries involved, as Turner observes, 'an international community of scholars and writers, many of whom appealed to the wisdom of Greece in terms of a universal human experience or some concept of uniform human nature', the study and interpretation of Greek antiquity 'occurred within the context of national intellectual communities whose characters bore the distinctive imprints of their respective political structures,' as well as other factors including epistemological bias and religious persuasion.[16] The ancient past was particularly called upon to idealise definitions of British national identity and notions of the self.[17] Indeed, so strict was the identification between the

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13 John Pentland Mahaffy, *Rambles and Studies in Greece* (Washington, D.C.: McGrath Publishing Co., 1876, reprinted 1973), pp. 50-52.

14 For further discussion on these discourses, see Lambropoulos, *The Rise of Eurocentrism: Anatomy of Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Leontis, *Topographies of Hellenism* (1995); see also Gregory Jusdanis, 'Farewell to the Classical: Excavations in Modernism', *Modernism/Modernity*, 11.1 (2004), 37-53 and Yannis Hamilakis, 'The Fragments of Modernity and the Archaeologists of the Future, Response to Gregory Jusdanis' [Farewell to the Classical: Excavations in Modernism'], *Modernism/Modernity* 11.1 (2004), 55-59.

15 For more discussion of this point, see Stephen L. Dyson, 'The Role of Ideology and Institutions in Shaping Classical Archaeology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' in *Tracing Archaeology's Past: The Historiography of Archaeology*, ed by Andrew L. Christenson, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), pp. 127-36.

16 Turner, p. 8.

17 Turner deals with this point extensively and discusses the case of Mahaffy, who argues that ancient texts are 'not mere objects of curiosity to the archaeologist […]. They are writings of men of like culture […], who argue with the same logic, who reflect with kindred feelings' (see Turner, p. 10ff).

ancient Greek and the modern British self that other nations' claims to this cultural entitlement – especially the modern Greeks' as we shall see in the second part of this essay – were often precluded.

Outside such strictly academic circles, Virginia Woolf, an advocate for women's education, values the image of shattered fragments as unmediated raw data to ground her sense of cultural entitlement to the ancient Greek past despite her bewailing the condition of belatedness. In 1906 on the road to Eleusis, the sacred way, Woolf observes: 'Once again, the Ancient Greek had the best of it: we were very belated wayfarers: the shrines are fallen, & the oracles are dumb. You have the feeling very often in Greece – that the pageant has passed long ago, & you are come too late, & it matters very little what you think or feel'.[18] In these 'innumerable fragments' 'the supreme Greek image' of the past is stamped onto modern consciousness:

> *There is a great deal to tantalise you in these Greek ruins; innumerable fragments & scarcely one whole piece anywhere.* The museum, if one may so abuse the clean & simple shed where the more delicate fragments are placed, holds some exquisite things. There is for example a noble victory, headless, wingless and armless: still her draperies & her fair body are enough to stamp once more that supreme Greek image on one's mind. And you find hints & reflections of this in a dozen smaller pieces.[19]

In these same musings, a sense of fragmentation also permeates her view of 'modern Greece' in its entitlement to this same past for it 'is so flimsy & fragile, that it goes to pieces entirely when it is confronted with the roughest fragment of the old'. [20]

In a period in which the growing (e)valuation of archaeological data becomes more and more subject to the dictates of academic research and professionalism, Mrs. Russell Barrington publishes her travelogue, *Through Greece and Dalmatia: A Diary of Impressions Recorded by Pen and Picture* (1912). Barrington, however, voices a position against the tide of recent archaeological inquiry for she articulates a provocative scepticism towards the value of the fragmentary findings unearthed in these expeditions. Rather than deify the significance of shattered stones and shards dug out of the depths of the earth, fragments of empirical data upon which knowledge about past cultural history and practices are projected, she argues that a better and more holistic understanding of antiquity is to be attained through its surviving textual heritage:

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18 Virginia Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals, 1897-1909*, ed. by Mitchell Leaska, (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt, Bruce and Jovanovich, 1990), p. 324.

19 Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice*, p. 324 (emphasis in the original).

20 Ibid.

> This great Greece, how strikingly small she is! And how very small are now the populated parts, compared to her solitary mountain ranges and uninhabited plains! Will the archaeologists ever get money enough to excavate all her ancient sites, and smother the surface of modern Greece with tangible resources of her ancient history? May we be allowed to hope they will not! Aeschylus and the mighty crew of poets have forwarded on to us better records of what the Greeks had in their heads and hearts when the great things were done, than the stones, even in their original completeness, could carry. They are but records of events, scanty compared with thoughts and feelings, and now, poor things! they are but very mutilated records. Is it not more decent to leave them covered, and more merciful to leave the beauty of the landscape of modern Greece unspoilt – that beauty which inspired Pheidias, Aeschylus, and their fellow-artists and poets? [21]

In this passage, we see a rhetoric that binds itself to the oppositions of big and small, surface and depth; ancient texts emerge as the 'better records,' while the stones are merely 'scanty' and 'mutilated' ones. Such a stance runs counter to the metaphor of the 'depth' of the past – an image that emulates archaeological activity itself and later surfaces in modernist literature as a model of historical consciousness, a point to which I will return later in this discussion.

Barrington also reflects on the wider meaning of the ruins on the Acropolis. Note her description of the Parthenon, which emerges as the potent 'shrine' out of the 'chaotic mass' of fragments and represents the perseverance of historical consciousness within the maelstrom of temporal change:[22]

> Still, though pathetic, though in rags, the Parthenon, is still a queen, stately and dominant, rising out from the chaotic mass of stones, blocks of marble, fallen columns, all huddled together and lying anyhow, mighty remnants of the most perfect building human beings have ever created [...] The destroyer has assailed the Acropolis in every sort of way. Inimical attacks have been hurled from Nature and by man in nearly every destructive form, and yet it is still there – still the most momentous spot in the whole world, as being the shrine for our most vivid associations with legend, history, and art in the far-away of the most momentous past. [23]

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[21] Mrs. Russell Barrington, *Through Greece and Dalmatia: A Diary of Impressions Recorded by Pen and Picture* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912), pp. 44-45.

[22] See also Ashley Brown's comment some fifteen years later in her travel book, *Greece Old and New* (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1927): 'The Acropolis ceases to be a ruin and by degrees takes shape as a centre of History and Art' (p. 43).

[23] Barrington, p. 54.

[24] Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice*, p. 323. See Leontis (1995) and Beard (2003) for discussions of Woolf's musings on the Helladic topos.

Two of Barrington's water-colours also published in this account, 'Athens and Her Mountains Seen through the Columns of the Erectheion' and 'The Parthenon, Athens' objectify, romanticise and aestheticise the Acropolis site. The density and prominence of the columns in these paintings graphically illustrate the consolidation of the power of the ancient tradition in the British imagination, one that had been firmly grounded earlier in the Victorian period, as well as emulate the 'imperial' regard characteristic of other contemporary British women travellers discussed by Mary Louise Pratt (1992).

We can compare Barrington's image of the Acropolis site to Virginia Woolf's 1906 description, which conveys the site as a work of art. In the following passage Woolf depicts the Parthenon as if it were an impressionistic painting in its play with light:

> And when you speak of 'the colour' of the Parthenon [at sunset] you are simply conforming to the exigencies of language; a painter using his craft to speak by, confesses the same limitations. The Temple glows red; the whole west pediment seems kindled, as if for the first time, in the sunset opposite: it rays light & heat, while the other temples burn with a white radiance. No place seems more lusty & alive than this platform of ancient dead stone [24]

Elsewhere she describes the pillars as 'rosy as dawn' and 'creamy white,' and the columns 'ashy pale'.[25] Woolf conveys the prominence of the monuments in relation to the surrounding countryside, as in the following passage in which she projects the landscape from the perspective of where the statue of Athena once stood:

> […] it is the Parthenon that over comes you; it is so large, & so strong, & so triumphant [...]. But perhaps the most lovely picture in it – at least it is the most detachable – is that which you receive when you stand where the great Statue used to stand. She looked straight through the long doorway, made by the curved lines of the columns, & saw a long slice of Attic mountain & sky & plain, & shining strip of the sea. It is like a panel, let in to the Parthenon to complete its beauty. It is soft, & soon grows dark, though the water still gleams; then you see that the white columns are ashy pale, & the warmth of the parthenon [*sic*] ebbs from her. [26]

Barrington's vistas recall a particular strand within Romantic thought. Her painting, 'View Across the Harbour of Patras to the Heights Above Missolonghi Where Byron Died',[27] pays homage to the English poet and his belief in Greece's national emancipation. Ironically, Byron, however, represents the shift within the discourse of Romantic Hellenism that valued

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25 Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice*, pp. 325, 323.

26 Ibid., p. 323.

27 Barrington, plate opposite p. 32.

the empirical experience of the Helladic world over its abstract textual interpretative tradition, as exemplified in Keats and Shelley. Yet, despite Barrington's rejection of the value of fragments, exponents of British Hellenism often drew upon images of broken stones and statues to ponder the continuing relevance of antiquity to modern consciousness.[28]

Yet another interpretation of the significance of the fragments surfaces with the publication of Mrs. R. C. Bosanquet's *Days in Attica* (1914) which, in its discussion of the treasures found in the Acropolis museum, highlights how fragmented debris from the destruction wrought on the Acropolis site during the Persian invasions was recycled in the later Periclean period's reconstruction. In discussing the material destruction and alteration of the site, she draws on her reading of Herodotus and splices the ancient narrative in her recounting of Athenian history:

> The objects all date from before the great destruction of the Acropolis by the Persians in 480 B.C. They were mostly found under the level of the present Parthenon, the broken fragments having been roughly shovelled together to make a broad terrace on which the new temple should be built. Herodotus tells the story of the national catastrophe that preceded the great rebuilding [...]. When the war was over and the victorious Athenians returned to the ruined Acropolis they found that the work of destruction was complete [...]. The debris of the old buildings and statues was used as worthy foundations to level up the narrow gable of the hill-top, till it widened to a broad platform on which the new buildings could be planted [29]

The heap of 'broken fragments' 'shovelled together' is recycled into the reconstruction of the new buildings, serving as an apt metaphor of her reading of the cyclical in history.

Such pronouncements on the meaning and significance of the fragments and ruins warrant theorisation. A number of examples among these women's accounts lie on the verge of a dramatic shift in the representation of the fragment within modernism and its implications for a reading of the past in Western consciousness. In her study *A Philosophy of History in Fragments* (1993), Agnes Heller points to two important spatial metaphors that surface in German modernism and challenge the dominant mode of expressing time-experience in terms of linearity.[30] The first is articulated in a phrase by

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[28] For a concise exposition of this point, see Webb (1993).

[29] Mrs. R.C. Bosanquet (Ellen Sophia Hodgkin), *Days in Attica* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1914) pp. 106-07.

[30] Agnes Heller, *Philosophy of History in Fragments* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993). As Heller explains, the past posited as something that we leave behind, as for example, when we say good-bye to our family home or birthplace, is a conventional rendering of a social rite that readily illustrates how spatial metaphors are used to make time, or time-experience, graphic. Our primary time-experience in this instance, Heller points out, is that of the irreversibility of happenings, events and decisions (pp. 36-37). Such a

Thomas Mann – 'deep is the well of the past'[31] – a metaphor that suggests how we stand on the surface in contrast to the abyss gaping in front of us. [32] The second is that of Walter Benjamin's for whom, as he remarks in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, the past did not resemble a well, but rather, an immense heap of unconnected ruins and fragments. For Benjamin, '[i]nstead of being hidden in the deep, in the underbelly of the Earth, history is altogether on the surface'.[33]

To illustrate Mann's metaphor even further, Heller draws an analogy to archaeologists, who unearth fragments, believing that, from the yield of their digging, a text can be deciphered and reconstructed, one that had once been the text of the whole.[34] By contrast, even though Benjamin refers to fragments, he does not envision these fragments as being unearthed. 'History' within his conceptualisation, she points out, 'is manifest on the surface; everything we know is a knowledge of ruins. No meaning can be rendered to these ruins by human recollection, for they are entirely void of the kind of sense we could possibly understand'.[35] While in archaeological recollection, she points out, the same fragment can generate a number of plausible stories, bringing forth many a spectacle; the modernist mode of recollection offers a single spectacle – the metaphor of the heap of ruins itself – in which the fragments do not readily convey meanings which are intelligible to human consciousness.[36]

One thinks of how this idea permeates Anglo-American and Greek modernist literatures, as in, for example, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, Nicolas Calas's 'Minoans' and George Seferis's 'The King of Asine' – all of which present a 'recollective spectacle', to use Heller's

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presupposition underlies not only our everyday thinking, but also permeates the basis of the social imaginary, upon which we have grounded our cultural institutions and sites – within the humanities, fine arts and education, for example – and informs the *episteme* of historiography as well as the philosophy of history since the Enlightenment, particularly in its production of contingency-based or deterministic interpretations of history. See also Heller's *Theory of History* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

31 Heller, *Philosophy of History in Fragments*, p. 37.

32 To illustrate the rootedness of the metaphor in Western consciousness, she draws analogies to antiquity, for example, in how the ancient Greeks envisioned the descent down into Hades as a descent into the well of the past; from there, she moves to the example of Hegel's philosophy (especially his *Philosophy of Religion*), which, too, envisions the crystallization of self-consciousness (or subjectivity) as the spirit sinking into the depths of the past. See Heller, *Philosophy of History in Fragments*, p. 37.

33 Ibid., p. 39.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

formulation, and reference aspects of the ancient past and its textual traditions by way of the metaphor of the heap of fragments.[37]

Late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century British travel writing, as evident in the examples we have just seen, appears at the threshold of this shift in representing the fragment and ruin as dominant metaphors of historical consciousness and, among them, are perhaps the most prominent examples – those of Harrison's, Woolf's and Bosanquet's. Harrison turns to the fragment to affirm continuity through her academic interest in ritual; Woolf not only advanced the idea of the fragment as a premise upon which to base her experimentation with form, but also employs it to articulate her observations of Greece in her travel diaries; Bosanquet reaffirms the cyclical in her reading of the past.

But unlike Harrison and Bosanquet, who use fragments to celebrate continuity, the fragments seemingly instil an emotional void in Woolf. Disconnected as they are, each of these examples illustrates how 'fragments' for the modern perceiving subject do not represent the totality of a past which can be collectively recounted by those who can actually remember it, as Heller observes. Whatever is left of the past is not retained in the memory of the living.[38] History is far too remote and inaccessible. Harrison and Woolf's observations, then, present us with a model of modern historical consciousness that confronts the remoteness of the past and ponders the ways in which it can be made accessible. Moreover, these cases serve as further evidence of how British nationalism looks to antiquity to form the definition of its national identity and deems it as its own exclusive cultural inheritance. What ultimately breathes life into their vision of ancient ruins is their powerful sense of nostalgia. In her description of the Parthenon, for example, Woolf observes how 'No place seems more lusty & alive than this platform of ancient dead stone'.[39] She illustrates how the fragments are made relevant to the modern perceiving eye through a mode of historical experiencing. Nostalgia revives the fragments and renders them meaningful to modern consciousness. Heller points out how '[m]any a modern man and woman have their moments of nostalgia [...]. They enliven the past on the common ground of their lived history'.[40] Nostalgia, simulated in art, religion and

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[37] The fragment often entails a search for a mechanism through which the modern subject can relive history; an instance of this search is exemplified in Seferis's poem, 'The King of Asine'. See Martha Klironomos, 'Ancient *anamnesis*, National *mneme* in the Poetry of Giorgos Seferis', special issue on 'Greek Worlds, Ancient and Modern', guest ed. by Gonda Van Steen, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 20.2 (October, 2002), 215-39.

[38] Heller, *Philosophy of History in Fragments*, p. 40.

[39] Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice*, p. 323.

[40] Heller, *Philosophy of History in Fragments*, p. 40. Woolf's brand of nostalgia can be compared to Seferis's in this regard. See Klironomos (2002).

philosophy, symbolically approximates the ideal mode of historical experiencing: the Hegelian notion of the 'living Spirit' and of 'living (*lebendige*) History'.[41] It is through art, religion and philosophy that our ancestors can be resurrected for they 'unite presentation with re-presentation, re-collection and re-membrance'.[42] Through these and other forms of ritual, the modern subject can be reconnected spiritually to its predecessors. It is in this way that we may appreciate Harrison's, Bosanquet's, and Woolf's musings on the fragment and their generation's claim on the ancient Greek past.

Sociological-Anthropological Travel

With the impetus sparked by recent archaeological discoveries, women's travel narratives produced in this period reflect the gradual growth of the tourist industry both in the point of origin, Britain, as well as in the target destination, Greece proper. Written against the backdrop of already established nineteenth-century guidebooks and handbooks on travel in Greece, women's travel narratives published in the early twentieth century were aimed at an emergent middle-class readership in Britain that included women. Several of these travel authors, however, exhibit varying levels of competence and expertise in writing about the ancient monuments and modern inhabitants of Greece alike. Many may have possessed knowledge of ancient Greek and classical literature; fewer were able to converse in modern Greek.

Within the travelogues produced in this period, moreover, we certainly see the influence of what had hitherto been a male-dominated genre. Many of these women travellers relied on and cited a few of the most popular male-authored travel books and handbooks on the subject, such as Murray's *Handbook of Greece* (1840), *Baedeker's Handbook for Travellers* (1889), and John Addington Symonds's *Sketches in Italy and Greece* (1874).[43] Women soon contributed to the genre as well, as evidenced in the publication of Mrs. Vernon Delves-Broughton's *Hand Book to the Antiquities of Athens* (1896).

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41 Heller, *Philosophy of History in Fragments*, pp. 40-41. Heller's source is Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*.

42 Ibid., p. 41.

43 Mrs. Russell Barrington, for example, cites Murray's popular guidebook (see her travel book *Through Greece and Dalmatia*, pp. 50 and 64) and also relies heavily on John Symonds, especially his views on the value of the Acropolis (see Barrington, pp. 51-54 and notes; pp. 73-76 and notes). Other popular travelogues of this period included Sir John Edwin Sandys's *An Easter Vacation in Greece* (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1887), whose rich bibliography does not include reference to any women-authored travel or guidebooks.

Within the group of travel narratives surveyed here are those with a 'sociological-anthropological' bent, which were published and included leisured-class as well as lay-person accounts, and, among them, a handful of commissioned travel books aimed at the British reading public, such as Mabel Moore's *Days in Hellas* (1909), Edith Browne's *Peeps at other Lands: Greece* (1909), and Mrs. R.C. Bosanquet's *Days in Attica* (1914), Agnes Conway's *A Ride through the Balkans* (1917), Ashley Brown's *Days in Hellas* (1927), Ethel Smyth's, *A Three-Legged Tour in Greece* (1927) and Betty Cunliffe-Owen's *Silhouettes of Republican Greece* (1927). These accounts, which often presupposed British claims on the ancient Greek heritage, included an assessment of the Greeks of the present age. Produced by authors with varying degrees of knowledge about contemporary Greek society and its customs, this set of narratives either treated the local Greek inhabitants as romanticised folk who exhibited practices and beliefs that conveyed residual traces of ancient Greek culture or viewed the native people as cultural *other*, denying an integral connection to their illustrious ancestry, and, as such, were produced as orientalised subjects, procuring travellers' judgments that ranged from the flattering to the disparaging.

First and foremost, these 'sociological-anthropological' accounts reflect the evolving and changing zones of contact between nations that surface in British-guest and Greek-host relations. Whereas earlier travel experiences in the late nineteenth century, such as those narrated by Harrison, for example, indicate rustic means of travel and the 'precariousness' of these ventures for women especially through the countryside, later travelogues, such as Bosanquet's *Days in Attica* (1914) and Agnes Conway's *A Ride Through the Balkans* (1917), illustrate the degree to which women travellers were beginning to have greater access in travelling to and throughout Greece.[44]

Greater access to travel presented a new set of social experiences between female traveller and indigenous host. In terms of actual contact with the host society, the travel narratives of this period show more of an interaction between the travellers and contemporary Greeks than those written in previous epochs, such as those from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries.[45] The zones of contact between genders and nations presented new and evolving attitudes towards the receptiveness of women travellers within

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[44] A number of these travel narratives refer to the issue of brigandage especially along the northern border between Greece and Ottoman-held territory. For example, see Bosanquet, p. 11. These travelogues also serve as important documents of the modernisation of Greece in the period. Several accounts, for example, refer to the eventual development of a railway system, the use of first and second-class liners and automobiles (see Browne, 1909, p. 81ff.; Bosanquet, pp. 8-9ff.).

[45] In addition to Angelomatis-Tsougarakis (1990), see also Tsigakou (1981), Constantine (1984), Eisner (1991), and Augustinos (1994).

Greek society, on the one hand, and habitual restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement within this social space, on the other. Harrison provides one such instance in her recollection of a trip to Greece in the 1880s wherein she is given special treatment because of her status as a female guest in observance of a religious ritual. As she writes:

> I remember at Tinos I was watching the procession of the miraculous Eikon; the priest carrying the Eikon saw that I was the only West-European woman struggling in a throng of men, and sent a young priest to fetch me to walk by his side. There I could safely watch all that went on, the bowings, the kissings of the Eikon, and the priests' splendid vestments, the cures.[46]

We witness in several women travellers' narrations, however, deviations from prescribed codes of behaviour – as Greece often became a site for their emancipation from the conventional constraints of the home society. At times, women travellers even broached the extreme, as Harrison admits to becoming a bit too familiar with her Greek host[47]:

> Greece in those days held many adventures. To one of these I still look back with poignant shame for my own bad manners. We arrived at Vurkano, just as the monastery gates were closing, and were hospitably received. The Hegoumenos led me into supper, placed me by his side, and fed me with tidbits from his own plate. The Greek clergy, even the monks who may not marry, are quite simple and friendly to women. After the Roman attitude, it is refreshing to be accepted as a man and a brother – if a weaker one – and not looked at with sour eyes as an incarnate snare.[48]

There is evidence that in the early twentieth century women travellers were still segregated from the wider segments of the indigenous populations in the countryside especially. Bosanquet presents the problem of how women's travel experiences were often, as such, mediated by the presence of the *dragoman*, whom she deems as a 'protector' between tourist and native, as she discusses in the following passage:

> You who travel 'personally conducted' cannot come into real contact with the country people. The most honest dragoman inevitably slides into the role of assuming that he is your protector and that all the country people are rogues. Your intercourse with them must be through him. The more he can exalt your position, the more he shines in reflected glory. Finally, you find yourself posing in lonely isolation as the English *lordos*. The children are

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46 Harrison, p. 66.

47 See Mary Beard's discussion of Harrison's 'episodes' in the Greek countryside in *The Invention of Jane Harrison* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) pp. 70-71 and p. 193, n. 57.

48 Harrison, p. 66.

> rebuked for shyly touching your hands, and you miss many naïve inquiries as to your wardrobe, your status, and your family.[49]

Yet in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), we see that women were gaining more access into all segments of Greek society and travelling unescorted, especially into domestic spaces, as illustrated in Agnes Conway's book *A Ride through the Balkans* (1917).[50] Sir Martin Conway points out this newfound trend in the book's preface: 'The fact that two young ladies, in the months immediately succeeding a bloody war, could wander unescorted through regions thus recently disturbed, and everywhere meet with nothing but kindness, helpfulness and hospitality at the hands of people belonging to [. . .] the peasant class is noteworthy'.[51]

He further comments on the unique perspective afforded to women travellers by gaining proximity to the folk, which challenges the negative stereotypes circulating about the Balkans peoples in the British press at the time.[52] Women's close contact with these indigenous peoples renders them as 'human,' Conway contends. He goes on to conclude that women's entry into such social spaces and their propensity for human fellowship distinguishes them from their male counterparts who, in like circumstances, would be driven to violence out of fear. He comments:

> It is not necessary even for young women to be confined to the beaten tracks of railways and the accommodation of first-class hotels. Women have shown themselves to be as venturesome and as capable travellers as men. No one could have been bolder, more efficient, or more successful than Miss Gertrude Lothian Bell in her difficult explorations of the ruined cities and palaces of Mesopotamia. The fact is that in the East women actually enjoy certain advantages in out of the way and disturbed parts. The natives are not afraid of them. It is fear even more frequently than any other emotion that makes a man shoot first in a country where every tribe's hand is against its neighbour [...]. She [the women traveller] is a novel sight. She is generally gifted with the power of making friends. Her thanks and pleasure are a reward that needs no baggage animal to carry it.[53]

Among the narratives that romanticise the local inhabitants are those that devote themselves to a descriptive account of the 'quaint' ways and manners of the Greeks encountered in the countryside. As Bosanquet remarks, 'To

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49 Bosanquet, pp. 3-4.

50 The premise of Agnes Conway's trip is to take photographs to fill in the gaps of existing archaeological finds. Conway is thus recording the very minutiae that make up existing archaeological records and empirical data to date (see *A Ride Through the Balkans, On Classic Ground with a Camera*, introduced by Sir Martin Conway (London: Robert Scott, 1917), pp. 12-15.

51 Conway, pp. 24-25.

52 Ibid., p. 23.

53 Ibid., pp. 24-25.

lose any opportunity for getting on friendly terms with the Greek peasant is a real loss, for no man is more simple and courteous than he'.[54] Indigenous as this social practice may have been in Greece at the time, a great emphasis is placed on Greek hospitality in guest-host relations. As Bosanquet puts it: 'The Greek peasant is at heart truly hospitable, and if you do not impress him as an exacting guest he will do his utmost to make you comfortable'.[55]

But upon more careful scrutiny, the emphasis on hospitality may in all essence convey the travellers' romantic quest for an elemental civility deemed lacking in their own home society. For Bosanquet, Greece signifies the lost paradise in pursuit of which the traveller willingly places herself, along the path of vulnerability, as she ventures into the unknown: 'Those who journey carrying with them the resources of civilisation', she observes, 'can never know the elemental joys that link us to a vanished age: the combat with hunger and weakness, the pleasurable dependence on the will of an unknown folk'.[56] Superficial and impressionistic as these popular travel books are, they serve in stark contrast to the more formalised ethnographic accounts produced by folklorists of the time, such as Lucy M. J. Garnett's.[57]

Within their romantic quest is a fundamental search for the residual traces of a lost past. Like the travellers surveyed earlier in this essay, Agnes Conway, too, conveys a penchant for nostalgia in her particular representation of present-day Greeks. In chronicling their folk customs and practices, Conway upholds the continuity thesis in her treatment of Eleusis as a site where residual traces of ancient practice can be linked to modern festivals, in this case, the *panegyre*. 'Greek dancing', she remarks, 'is never a joyous performance, and retains much of the solemnity of its religious and

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54 Bosanquet, p. 4.

55 Ibid., p. 6.

56 Ibid., pp. 3-4.

57 The author of *Greek Folk-Songs from the Turkish Provinces of Greece, Albania, Thessaly and Macedonia: Literal and Metrical Translations*, ed. by J.S. Stuart-Glennie (London: E. Stock, 1885) and *Greece of the Hellenes* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), Garnett researched and studied Greek, Turkish and Balkan folklore. In the chapter she devotes to 'Traits of Greek Character,' she writes of the value of poetry and of the oral tradition through which one can acquire 'true' knowledge of popular consciousness: 'To understand a people thoroughly, one must have some knowledge of its folk poesy. From its culture-poets one can obtain but a very partial, if indeed, any true view at all of how the great masses of the people feel and think. […]. But the nameless bards whose utterances are preserved, not in printed volumes, but in the hearts of the folk, and transmitted from generation to generation as their most precarious knowledge, lives less in proportion to their own originality than to the force and freshness with which they feel and think with the commonalty, and hence, in proportion to the spontaneous truthfulness with which they voice ideas, sentiments and aspirations actually and widely cherished' (Garnett, *Greece of the Hellenes*, p. 227).

ritual origin. The finely dressed, slowly moving, weirdly accompanied circles of dancers might still have been enacting the rhythmic movements that rotated the seasons and fertilised the earth, so serious and tense was their mien'.[58] Her photograph, entitled 'Dancers at Eleusis' presents an objectification of a semi-circle of Greek village women dancing and celebrating 'apokries', i.e., carnival, at the site;[59] a second photograph, entitled 'Spectators at Eleusis', offers a close-up of the onlookers of the dance and humanises its Greek subjects, staging a depiction of folk simplicity and integrity.[60]

In the search to re-discover Greece's legacy of the past, several travelogues integrate an assessment of the Greeks of the present age, who often are posited in comparison with their ancestors. It is a variation of the theme of the ancient vs. the moderns firmly ensconced in Victorian thinking. This is aptly suggested in Barrington's watercolour entitled 'Byronic Corsair, Temple of Sunium' featuring a Greek warrior wearing the national dress, the fustanella, with a bayonet in hand and standing next to a Greek column.[61] In Barrington's watercolours of two well-known Athenian Byzantine monuments, the Metropolitan and the Kapnikarea churches,[62] the modern Greek subjects are relegated to a marginal status, markedly minimised in stature and placed off to the edge of the paintings. Her focus is clearly on the prominence and magnitude of the Byzantine monuments.

Further along the lines of generating a portrait of the Greeks as cultural *other* are a handful of travel accounts that exhibit an 'orientalist' bias. In these accounts the women narrators are often found to regard themselves as the so-called 'civilised' *self* and the Greeks as the 'uncouth' *other*. If we could extrapolate from Edward Said's discussion of how the British self constructs the Eastern subject,[63] we can draw apt parallels to similar representations of the inhabitants of Greece in a few female-authored travel

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58 Conway, p. 30.

59 See Conway, plate opposite p. 30. See also the photograph entitled 'Girls Dancing at Easter Festival,' depicting a similar scene during an Easter celebration in Betty Cunliffe-Owen's account, *Silhouettes of Republican Greece* (London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd, 1927), which prefers to capture the moment of the break-up of the dance (Cunliffe-Owen, plate opposite p. 74).

60 See Conway, plate opposite p. 32. Conway may be compared to other travellers who aestheticise folk presence in the visual arts, as seen in Barrington's watercolour, entitled 'Street Scene in Athens (Boy loading donkey with jars)' (Barrington, plate opposite p. 33). The young village boy in this painting is romanticised in blue hues. The toil and hardship typical of a Greek villager's life during this time period is totally obliterated in this depiction

61 See Barrington, plate opposite p. 121.

62 See Barrington, plate opposite p. 80.

63 See Edward Said (1978).

narratives produced in this period, emulating similar attitudes expressed in previously published and contemporary male-authored travelogues.[64]

Such an orientalist posturing permeates, for example, Ethel Smyth's narrative, *A Three-Legged Tour in Greece* (1927),[65] which contains many demeaning and disparaging comments on the apparent deficiencies of the modern Greek subject. An intimate friend of Woolf's, Smyth comments on how, for example, the modern Greeks are uncivil, disorganised and seemingly 'recalcitrant to abstraction'.[66] Woolf herself held a similar stance towards the 'unbred' folk, as articulated in her 1906 travel diaries:

> Like a shifting layer of sand these loosely composed tribes of many different peoples lie across Greece; calling themselves Greek indeed [...] [T]he language they talk is divided from the language that some few of them can write as widely as that again is divided from the language from the speech of Plato [...]. The peasants drop their syllables, & slur vowels. [67]

And she concludes: 'So you must look upon Modern Greek as the impure dialect of a nation of peasants, just as you must look upon the modern Greeks as a nation of mongrel element & a rustic dialect of barbarous use beside the classic speech of pure bred races'.[68] On the basis of language, ethnicity and

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[64] In the period in question in this essay, Mahaffy's example is worth noting. He casts Modern Greece in a paradigm of continuity with its illustrious antecedent past, but ascribes its apparent weaknesses to Ottoman influence, and herein Mahaffy espouses a stance much like that of the British orientalist of the time, one which projects the superiority of the West in contrast to the East in his survey of the topography of Greece upon his arrival to this geographical space: 'Mohammedan rule and Eastern jealousy – long unknown in Western Europe – first jarred upon the traveller when he touched the coasts of Greece; and this dependency was once really part of a great Asiatic Empire, where all the interests and communications gravitated eastward, and away from the Christian and better-civilised West. The revolution which expelled the Turks was unable to root out the ideas which their subjects had learned; and so, in spite of Greek hatred of the Turk, his influence still lives through Greece in a thousand ways' (Mahaffy, p. 17).

[65] See Ethel Smyth, *A Three-Legged Tour in Greece*. *[March 24-May 4 1925]* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1927 plate opposite p. 142.

[66] Smyth, pp. 21-22.

[67] Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice*, p. 340. Woolf's perspective on the contemporary Greeks here in 1906 was heavily influenced by her host, Frank Noel, a British land-owner whose family had lived in Euboea for generations. Her stance, however, was to change markedly in her second trip to Greece with Leonard Woolf in 1932 in which she romanticises the folk. For an alternative reading of Woolf's stance, see Vassiliki Kolocotroni, '"This Curious Silent Unrepresented Life": Greek Lessons in Virginia Woolf's Early Fiction', *Modern Language Review* 100: 2 (April) 2005, 313-22

[68] Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage Books, 1995), p.229. I cite here Lee's quotation from Woolf's 1906 diary, based on the typescript version housed in the Berg collection of the New York Public Library, as the excerpt from the original diary has been

class, Woolf denies the modern Greeks' cultural entitlement to the ancient Greek past – ironically, many of the same cultural markers that the British have used to justify their own claims. Ashley Brown in *Greece: Old and New* (1927) is equally critical in her assessment of the 'character' of the modern Greeks, who in her harsh estimation lack moral courage and the ability to be forthright, and, *pace* R. C. Jebb, are not the pure bred descendants of the ancients.[69]

The main concern of this discussion has been to survey a number of examples of British women's travel narratives to Greece during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period which reveals the rise of an educated class and an evolving professionalism among women. Resuming trends set in the Victorian period, the discourse of British Hellenism during this period under consideration sought to claim even more authority over the production of knowledge about ancient Greece through its educational and academic sites, which often precluded nativist claims, in cordoning off the domain of antiquity as its point of origin and the basis upon which to trace cultural continuity. This survey, moreover, also reviews a segment of popular travel writing and other related arts that focused on Greece as its subject produced during this period, which extended far beyond academic and philological writing, and included the travel and guidebook as well as painting and photography. Within the popular writing surveyed here, especially in the aforementioned group of sociological-anthropological travelogues, the collective assessment of the modern inhabitants of Greece that prevail in this corpus, reflect women's progress towards social and intellectual autonomy, on the one hand, but also, on the other, illustrate consensus with attitudes and biases espoused by male counterparts in positing the superiority of the British national *self* and in producing the contemporary Greeks as cultural *other*. Problematic as these admissions are, many of these prevailing attitudes and biases against the Greeks continue to permeate travellers' perceptions of present-day Greece and, by virtue of this discussion, reflects a tradition far more grounded and widely held in epochs closer to our own than previously understood.

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mis-transcribed by Mitchell Leaska in *A Passionate Apprentice*. (See Lee's explanatory footnote, p. 797, n.72). For a discussion on modern Greece's claims to the ancient Greek past, see Michael *Herzfeld, Folklore, Ideology and the Making of Modern Greece* (New York: Pella, 1983).

69 See Ashley Brown, p. 215 and p. 219. See also her chapter on 'Modern Athens', p. 8ff.

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Artemis Leontis

Eva Palmer's Distinctive Greek Journey

Abstract

American expatriate Eva Palmer's name does not mean much outside Greece, where people know her intimately as Eva Sikelianos, the loyal wife of poet Angelos Sikelianos and his collaborator in organising two festivals at Delphi in 1927 and 1930. Yet the long-term effects of Palmer's sojourn in Greece from 1906 to 1933 make her the most influential traveller to Greece in modern times, rivalling if not surpassing Lord Byron. The story of Palmer's passionate engagement with her adopted home, her groundbreaking productions of ancient plays in open air theatres, compositions drawn from Byzantine music, experiments with Greek dance, and the international reaction her work elicited is worth revisiting, especially as newly discovered sources make possible a revaluation of her life. Moreover, her relationship to Greece raises interesting questions about overlooked qualities of women's travel in the twentieth century.

When Eva Palmer (1874-1952) first travelled to Greece in 1906, nothing distinguished her from other eccentric travellers of her era.[1] An upper class American with a substantial inheritance, thoughtful, literate, acquainted with the arts and culture, she had classical learning, a keen interest in drama, and well-developed notions about Greece. Emotions moved her to travel: disillusionment with the intellectual atmosphere back home; longing for something closer to the origins of the civilization she admired; anticipation that she might find intimacy in Greece. So she determined to go 'Greek', [2] that is, to travel to Greece dressed in sandals and straight, hand-woven tunics in imitation of styles found on Greek vases, and there to live among the bees and goatherds on the slopes of Mt. Hymettos, delighting in nature and the Greek language.

Soon after her arrival, she suffered the shock of cultural misapprehension. 'One thing fell athwart my pleasure', as she put it. The anecdote appears in *Upward Panic*, her posthumously published autobiography, where Palmer

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[1] I am grateful to the staff of the Historical Archives of the Benaki Museum and to Lia Papadaki for assisting me with research in the Eva Palmer Sikelianos papers.

[2] To pin down the notion of 'Greek' that inspired an educated, cosmopolitan, English-speaking woman of Palmer's era is nearly impossible, since the 'Greek' was laden with so many different meanings and values. For an introduction, see Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). For accounts of other distinctive features of the 'Grecomania' of the period, such as the fascination with the body, clothed and unclothed, see also Harold Koda, *Goddess: The Classical Mode* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003); Nancy Boyd, 'The Greek Dance', *Distressing Dialogues* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1924).

recalled her daily pilgrimage down from 'Kopanos', the half-built house built by Isadora and Raymond Duncan, through Pangrati to a bank in Athens to inquire about some lost bank notes. As she and fellow traveller Raymond Duncan passed through the streets, both adorned in their 'Greek' clothes, 'children, men, women, everyone seemed to have abandoned work and play to come look at us. They were not disagreeable, but terribly talkative […] I was completely discouraged'.[3]

Right then and there Eva Palmer might have followed the path of many travellers. She might have dismissed contemporary Greeks with derogatory remarks (Duncan's response) while confirming her preconceived notions about ancient Greece, visited a few ancient sites, then eventually passed through the country without leaving her mark. Or she might have stayed but embraced the bitterness that follows cultural misunderstandings. But this was not her story. Rather than leave or denounce Greece, Eva Palmer found in contemporary Greece intellectual nourishment. Indeed, she devoted the next quarter century to exploring her ideas about drama and music in and through Greece. Hers was the rare case of a traveller who paused to adjust her preconceptions and found reasons and the means to cultivate her attachment.

Eva Palmer's Greek journey is the subject of this essay. Emphasis falls on Eva Palmer-Sikelianos, a woman little known outside Greece but universally admired by Greeks as the supportive wife of poet Angelos Sikelianos and co-organiser with him of festivals at Delphi in 1927 and 1930. Who was that woman? What path led her to Greece? What encumbrances did she carry with her besides her 'Greek' tunics and sandals? What happened to her after the crowds in Pangrati gave her reason to pause? How did she revise notions she had carried with her to Greece? How did she manage to leave her mark in Greece while drawing on artistic and philosophical ideas she had imported with her from the United States and Paris? Why did her artistic discoveries not bring her fame outside Greece?

Emphasis also falls on the journey. What can we learn about travel from Eva Palmer's twenty-some year stay in Greece? Is this a forgotten case of an American expatriate – someone we can compare with Henry James, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, or Ernest Hemingway? For all of whom determined 'to leave physically […] and fulfil their intellectual and artistic missions in Europe, where it seemed to them that industrialism had not yet smothered the free operation of individual personalities'.[4] How does she differ from them?

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[3] Eva Palmer-Sikelianos, *Upward Panic*, ed. by John P. Anton (Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993). p. 54. Henceforth referred to as *UP*.

[4] James Binder, 'Interview with Eva Sikelianos', in *The Athens News* (May 1952), reprinted in *Eva Palmer-Sikelianou*, special issue of *Eos* (1966-67) (Athens: Papademas, 1996), p.

Is her only distinction that she is forgotten?[5] Does it lie in her decidedly Greek obsessions – hand-woven tunics, marriage to a Greek poet, theories about Greek drama, and debts that left her impoverished? Or is there something more to be found in Eva Palmer's Greek journey, which can shed new light on the subject of travel to Greece, or, more broadly, women's travel?

The Forgotten Eva

The name Eva Sikelianos still inspires fond admiration in Greeks.[6] First wife of Angelos Sikelianos, she is remembered as his collaborator in the revival of ancient festivals at Delphi in 1927 and 1930. Journalists and critics regularly recall the effort, assigning to Eva a prominent role. She was the pillar that bore the man of vision, the woman who offered him moral support, the good wife, who graciously adopted his homeland for 27 years, the sponsor who impoverished herself so that he could materialise his Delphic Idea, and, for some who know her work well, the choreographer and director who gave form to his vision. People from Delphi and elsewhere treasure the legacy of her presence there almost 80 years ago. More than just Sikelianos's wife, they remember her as a beloved Philhellene, who learned to speak Greek, respected Greek ways, developed her ideas about Greek drama, music, and dance in Greece, and gave distinction to Greece through her work. They compare her to 'Byron, Shelley, Delacroix'.[7] Loyalty is her most consistent attribute, for she remained faithful to Sikelianos and to Greece – even after she left Greece and he took up with another woman. She persisted in trying –

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378. Binder begins his interview by comparing Sikelianos to these four American writers. He later mentions Henry Miller.

5 Neither Robert Eisner's fairly comprehensive *Travelers to an Antique Land* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993) nor David Roessel's *In Byron's Shadow: Modern Greece in the English and American Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) devote so much as a footnote to Eva Palmer.

6 Periodically, conferences and publications pay tribute to her work. Among the best collections of essays on Eva Palmer and the Delphic Festivals to date are 'Eva Palmer-Sikelianou', special issue of *Eos*, and *70 Hronia apo tis protes Delfikes Eortes. To archaio drama stous Delfous apo ton Angelo Sikeliano eos tis emeres mas* [70 years since the first Delphic Festivals. Ancient drama at Delphi from the time of Angelos Sikelianos to the present], Conference Proceedings, ed. by. John P. Anton (Athens: Livane, 2002).

7 Athan[asios] Karras, 'The Tragic Chorus and Greek Dance', *70 Hronia apo tis protes Delfikes Eortes. To archaio drama stous Delfous apo ton Angelo Sikeliano eos tis emeres mas* [70 years since the first Delphic Festivals. Ancient drama at Delphi from the time of Angelos Sikelianos to the present], Conference Proceedings, ed. by. John P. Anton (Athens: Livane, 2002), pp. 147-159 (p. 152).

unsuccessfully – to secure American funding for his 'Delphic Idea'. When she returned to Greece in 1952, it was to mourn his death and to die among friends. She lost consciousness during a performance of *Prometheus Bound* held in her honour at Delphi and died a few days later in a hospital in Athens. She was buried next to Angelos Sikelianos at Delphi – just as she desired.

Outside Greece, Eva Palmer-Sikelianos is unknown. This was not always the case. Once the family name Palmer was so renowned in New York City that Sarah Bernhardt cancelled an appearance with Eva, then a budding actress, because 'New York newspapers […] evince[d] more interest in me as my father's daughter than [Bernhardt] considered fitting for anyone who was to act with her' (*UP* 37). That was the apogee of Palmer's fame in the United States. Today, her name only appears occasionally in the margins of some errant tales that touch on her activities before she travelled to Greece.

Some recently discovered sources, however, together with some overlooked ones, make it possible to develop a broader, richer view of Eva Palmer's Greek journey, one that starts and ends outside Greece with a series of connections and collaborations in American and European modernist circles, even as it retraces the path Eva Palmer followed to and through Greece. In papers unearthed with the recent rediscovery of Natalie Clifford Barney, for example, another wealthy American heiress who found her niche in artistic circles in Europe, one finds important clues about the youthful emergence of Palmer's passionate engagement with Greece. Barney's published works and archival materials have yielded stories of the adolescent Palmer's and Barney's lesbian relationship, stimulated in part through side by side readings of ancient Greek literature.[8] At their families' Bar Harbor summer homes, they alternately read Plato and traipsed together naked in the woods,[9] enjoying a sexual freedom they had discovered in Greek sources. Palmer went on to study Greek at Bryn Mawr, where Barney briefly joined her. 'She sat in on classes given by feminist literary professor Mary 'Mamie' Guinn, who had lived for years with Bryn Mawr's president, Carey Thomas', in a relationship that 'played a big role in Gertrude Stein's novel

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[8] Lia Papadaki, *Grammata tes Evas Palmer Sikelianou ste Natalie Clifford Barney* [Letters of Eva Palmer-Sikelianos to Natalie Clifford Barney] (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1995) presents Palmer's side of the two women's correspondence, as found in La bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet. Most of Barney's letters to Palmer form the inaccessible piece of Angelos Sikelianos's papers in the Archive of Melpo and Octave Merlier at the Centre for Asia Minor Studies. Octave Merlier is said to have collected those letters from the ruins of the Sikelianos home at Delphi during the Greek Civil War.

[9] See *Renée Vivien - Natalie Barney - Eva Palmer, Album Secret*, ed. with notes by Jean-Paul Goujon (Paris: Éditions a L'ecart, 1984). See also Karla Jay, *The Amazon and the Page: Natalie Clifford Barney and Renée Vivien* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988).

Fernhurst'.[10] When she learned all the Greek she could from formal schooling, Palmer followed Barney to Paris. She became one in a colourful circle of artists who frequented Barney's salon. Not a few of them were also looking for alternative, 'Greek' models for their life and art. Although more retreating than Barney, the lovely Eva Palmer with the foot-length red hair did not pass unnoticed. She is even rumoured to have been the source of inspiration for 'a slim, red-haired young girl huddled in [the] shadow' of an unapologetic and flirtatious lesbian heroine (modelled on Barney) in Colette's *Claudine s'en va*.[11]

There are other unexplored angles to Eva Palmer-Sikelianos's Greek story. Her contacts in the arts were widespread. We learn about her strong interest in Wagnerian opera from Barney's *Souvenirs indiscrets*. Composer Richard Strauss stayed at the Sikelianos home in Delphi in the 1920s, something that makes sense given not only Palmer's large, international circle of acquaintances but also a shared interest in Greek myth as a source for the integrated and complete work of art, as well as the architecture of the Greek stage that would bring myth to life.[12] There are also important ties with actors and dancers. Eva had some kind of contact with the Provincetown Players, a thespian group committed to producing a new kind of theatre, some of it inspired by Greek myths, for American audiences. The Players brought into public view works by Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell, Djuna Barnes, and others. George Cram ('Jig') Cook, the Players' founder, director and a playwright, left the group with Glaspell, his wife, after the collaboration started breaking down to take up residence at Delphi in 1922. There he staged tragedies on the mountainside directing villagers as actors. *Upward Panic* names Cook as a translator 'of [Angelos's] shorter poems'; but his death a little more than a year after arrival put an end to the plan 'to leave everything Angelos had written adequately translated into English' (*UP* 71).[13]

Eva Palmer's passion for Greece also brought her into close association with Isadora and Raymond Duncan. It was with Raymond Duncan and his wife, Penelope Sikelianos, that Palmer travelled to Greece. She was their

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10 Suzanne Rodriguez, *Wild Heart: A Life. Natalie Clifford Barney's Journey from Victorian America to Belle Époque Paris* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), p. 118.

11 Rodriguez, pp. 152-53.

12 The visit is described in Thanos Konstantinides, *O Richardos Strauss sto Delfiko spiti ton Sikelianon* [Richard Strauss at the Delphi home of the Sikelianos] (Athens: Agra, 1999).

13 In contrast to Palmer's autobiography, Susan Glaspell's biography of Cook, *The Road to the Temple* (New York and Toronto: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1927, 1941), does not name the Sikelianoses, though it speaks obliquely of them, mentioning a visit to Sykia (p. 370), where the Sikelianoses lived, and 'Greeks' who 'revived the Pythian Games' at the 'stadium of Delphi in memory of George Cram Cook' (p. 444).

guest for a fortnight in their half-finished home at Kopanos: a fort-like building modelled on Agamemnon's palace and located at the foot of Mt. Hymettos outside Athens at a height equal to the Acropolis.[14] And it was through them that she met Angelos. Palmer followed Isadora Duncan's work with great interest and developed a choreographic method and style in response to Duncan's.

Palmer was also one of a few, mainly upper-class women who pursued a classical education in the late 1800s, then found ways to bring that learning to the college stage. She directed performances of the *Bacchae* at Bryn Mawr and Smith in the 1930s and made other forays onto the stage. At about the same time, she was offered but turned down a position in the Yale University School of Drama. Her work on Greek drama at American universities is the subject of new scholarly work examining the place of women in the formation of Greek studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[15]

An account of Eva Palmer's contacts and credits in the arts outside Greece would grow tiresome if it listed all her ties. In any case, the point is that her obscurity is incommensurate with her range and accomplishments. Why she has been overlooked is a subset of larger questions about scholarship on Greece. Certainly Palmer's obscurity derives in part from modern Greece's between-ness in the classical world, the Balkans, and the eastern Mediterranean. But the lack of familiarity with her intellectual and artistic contributions also has a very practical explanation: until very recently, there was a dearth of published sources.

Since the 1990s this is no longer the case. The greatest impetus to a change in Eva Palmer's status from an obscure American expatriate wife to an experimental director, choreographer, and composer can be found in the

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[14] Also notable is Palmer's enduring friendship with Frances Sikelianos, née LeFevre, first wife of Glafkos, Angelos and Eva's son. She translated *The Dithyramb of the Rose* into English and printed it privately for choreographer Ted Shawn (see *Upward Panic*, p. 207, note by John P. Anton). Her correspondence with Palmer, found in the Benaki Historical Archive, is extensive. Later, as Frances Waldman, she passed on to her daughter, poet Anne Waldman, a lifelong admiration for the woman both remembered as a visionary. Waldman has called herself the great step-granddaughter of Angelos and Eva Sikelianos. She spoke about them in 'Sikelianos' Delphic Idea: Site and Poetic Legacy', a lecture given at the University of Michigan, Sunday, October 17, 1999, published in *Vow to Poetry*, pp. 137-144.

[15] Yopie Prins presented preliminary work on this topic in two papers: 'Modern Maenads', read at the symposium, 'Dead Lovers: Erotic Bonds and the Study of Pre-Modern Europe', University of Michigan, 7 March 2003 and at the conference, 'The Myth of Dionysus Then and Now', University of North Carolina, 28-29 March 2003; and 'The *Bacchae* Directed by Eva Palmer-Sikelianos at Women's Colleges', read at the workshop, 'Eva Sikelianos: Past, Present, and Future Directions', University of Michigan, 22 January 2005.

recent discovery and publication of her writings. First there is the cache of letters to Natalie Clifford Barney, published by Lia Papadaki in Greek translation in *Grammata tes Evas Palmer Sikelianou ste Natalie Clifford Barney* [Letters of Eva Palmer Sikelianos to Natalie Clifford Barney].[16] These give a vital picture of Palmer's complex relationship to Barney from adolescence to old age but also of her marriage to Angelos. More crucial to the subject of Palmer's Greek journey, they provide a much-needed context for understanding her deep interest in Greek language, myth and culture: her glorification of the simplicity of the ancient past in contrast to the industrialised present, her obsession with Greek dress, her interest in Greek myths, particularly those that underscored freedom and gave to women leading roles.[17]

Then there are the *Letters by Eva Palmer-Sikelianos on Ancient Drama* (*Epistoles tes Evas Palmer-Sikelianou yia to Archaio Drama*), edited in a bilingual edition by John P. Anton.[18] These include 18 letters to Joan Vanderpool dated from July 1935 to January 1936, two letters to choreographer and dancer Ted Shawn from 1939, and the transcript of a letter to Angelos Sikelianos dated 21 April 21 1950. Together they help one understand Palmer's approach to Greek drama: her strict critical standards for bringing Greek drama into an English language performance, her understanding of the role and especially the dramatic function of the chorus in performance.

Most significant, however, is the posthumous publication of Eva Palmer-Sikelianos's autobiography, *Upward Panic*. For decades there were rumours of an autobiography, begun in 1938, reportedly at Angelos's instigation.[19] The book is a major untapped resource for not just Eva's life but also the study of travel, Greece, classicism, and modernism in the early twentieth century. A memoir of artistic exploration, it seamlessly interweaves the

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16 The resurfacing of those letters owes something to Barney's rediscovery during the past two decades, but even more, but only for readers of Greek, to Papadaki, whom Glafkos Sikelianos encouraged to translate and publish the letters, displaying, as Papadaki puts it, the 'broad and uncompromising way of thinking, which he inherited from his mother', according to Papadaki (*Grammata*, p. 11).

17 Rodriguez, *Wild Heart*, p. 89.

18 Eva Palmer-Sikelianos, *Letters by Eva Palmer-Sikelianos on Ancient Drama* (*Epistoles tes Evas Palmer-Sikelianou yia to Archaio Drama*), original English text with Greek translations by Loukia Tsokopoulou, ed. by John P. Anton (Athens: Nea Synora, 1997).

19 *Upward Panic*, 'Introduction' by John P. Anton, p. xxii. Anna G. Antoniades, executor of Eva's estate in Greece, found the manuscript among the papers Eva brought back with her to Greece in 1952 and sent it to various publishers in the United States, only to have it rejected. The manuscript remained in the Historical Archives of the Benaki Museum until John P. Anton edited and published it.

author's journey to Greece with the story of her journey through life. It places classical Greece at the epicentre of both journeys. More than any other source, *Upward Panic* has made possible a reassessment of Palmer's life and art, though it certainly presents the life as Palmer wanted it remembered. *Upward Panic* should be read alongside other women's autobiographies. In it one finds yet another woman of the late Victorian era who defied expectations. Rather than remain submissively at home, she writes of how she seized opportunities for adventure abroad. One discovers Eva Palmer, the forgotten artist who emerged from an intimate coterie of women pursuing Classical studies in the U.S. to live a Bohemian life in Paris among the stars of early modernism in dance and theatre. One reads her account of the chain of events that pulled her away from Paris to Greece and there held her spirit even when financial circumstances required her to return to the United States. One learns of her leading role in giving artistic direction to the Delphic Festivals of 1927 and 1930, where she was presumed to have been following Angelos Sikelianos's lead. One begins to understand her relationship with her husband, 'his' people, and 'his' home. While Palmer made her home in Greece for 27 years and there stood by her husband, it is also clear that she did not settle into an identifiable role as a Greek spouse. She and Angelos seemed to have found a large degree of independence in their marriage; they often travelled independently and treated one another as partners in projects they pursued together. From her vantage point in Greece, where she felt at home, she still enjoyed one of the standard pleasures of travel: the pleasure of theorising – of finding a place away from familiar ground to take in a broad view of self, family, society, its customs and its creations. Without the autobiography, it would be impossible to reconstruct that story, or, rather the imaginary line connecting the points in her distinctive and meaningful journey through Greece, actual and remembered, that the author traces in her account.

The Path to Greece

A good place to study that imaginary line is the passage cited at the beginning of this essay, in which Eva Palmer, a new arrival, encountered the jabbering 'mob' of Greeks. One should try to grasp, first, what disheartened the author; second, what she observed; and third, how the scene connects with what came before in Palmer's life and sets readers up for what will follow. The scene's logic reaches backwards, recalling her discontent as her work in drama had reached a dead end but a chance meeting had opened a window to another world. But it also launches forward, as it anticipates her

desire to pursue a new artistic course in Greece. The scene immediately follows her meeting in Paris with Angelos's sister, Penelope, whose voice inspired Palmer to experience Greece firsthand. It precedes Palmer's first meeting with Angelos, her future husband and the self-declared 'reason for coming to Greece' (*UP* 57).

A closer reading reveals that Palmer was discouraged not because a Greek 'mob' stared and talked, as one might expect, but because she had naively expected that she could control its reaction. Recalling the scene, she did not remember faulting the Greeks. She did not consider changing countries in order to find a more sympathetic crowd. Rather she blamed her 'childish and silly' expectations that people would accept her simple and free outward appearance if it harmonised with her inward attitude. 'I believed that if one's garments be an outward and visible sign of a simple and unaffected attitude toward life, and if one's appearance harmonise as far as may be with one's own spirit, the effect of that appearance on others will also be simple and free from strain. But the first day that I walked into Athens with Raymond, […] I was completely discouraged. I felt that all my notions about clothes were childish and silly, and I cursed my own impulsiveness which had prompted me to abandon everything I then needed'(*UP* 54). Because the scene recurred for several days (Palmer had to follow up on her expected bank order), Palmer could observe the crowd's reaction over time. What struck her was the repetition of the scene, until one day there was a complete reversal. For as long as Palmer made the pilgrimage with Raymond Duncan, which was almost every day, the mob returned: 'There was something in his aura which seemed to evoke the sarcastic, idle, or voluble curiosity of unknown people in the street. They would crowd around him through no apparent summons on his part, so that it was like going out to walk with a bitch in heat when no dog appears to be near, but presently a whole pack gathers from nowhere' (*UP* 55). On the one occasion when Palmer walked into Athens with Penelope alone, however, 'that day we might just as well have been walking in our private garden. Nobody followed us, nobody spoke to us or about us, except for an occasional friendly greeting as we passed' (*UP* 54). Palmer's observation – audiences behave differently depending on the players – was insistently theatrical, as if all of Greece afforded her a theatrical space where she could test her theories of drama. Here we see evidence of a motif that runs through Palmer's writing. By comparing Penelope and Raymond Duncan's approach, she was learning something about Greeks as a potential audience. Whenever she walked with Raymond, the crowd was repelled. The one time she walked alongside Penelope, the effect was exactly as Eva had desired it: 'simple and free from strain'. Even on the streets of Athens, Palmer observed, Penelope could raise a crowd to a

new level of respect, whereas Raymond elicited voluble curiosity and sarcasm.

A question lingers in Eva's retelling of this scene in relation to what precedes and follows: what was there about Penelope's presence that moved people? What was in her gestures, her voice that could raise an audience's consciousness to an unexpected level? The question had a personal dimension for Eva Palmer, for it was Penelope who convinced Eva to travel to Greece to meet her brother (who, it could be argued, stood in the place of Penelope as an unmarried male replica). Penelope had only to recite Angelos's poetry once to move Eva to change her life's direction: 'I was like a princess in a tower who had never heard a poem before, never heard a poet spoken of before. I told Penelope that I wanted to know her brother, and that I wanted nothing more' (*UP* 51).

The question of Penelope's powerful presence had broader artistic and intellectual ramifications for Eva. It challenged notions about Greece that she had been carrying with her all her adult life and inspired her to return to a question she had suppressed for years. What did music mean to Plato? What did it mean to the Greeks? Was there an alternative model for organising sound, guiding melody up and down, connecting sound and words through meaning? Was there something here that Eva Palmer might capture and produce?

It mattered that Penelope Sikelianos was a stage actress who, together with her brother Angelos, had performed in some groundbreaking productions of ancient drama by the Athenian company, *Nea Skini*, at the turn of the century, and who later would perform with Eva in a production of Sophocles' *Electra* 'in ancient Greek, at the Chatelet, and afterwards at Trocadero' (*UP* 55). She was a master of delivery. What intrigued Eva most was her voice. On their first meeting Eva had seen Penelope rise and sing 'two Greek Ecclesiastical melodies, the first quite slow, the second rather rapid. On me the effect was catastrophic. It was as if a wet sponge had been passed over a closely written chalk-board. I felt that I had heard music for the first time, hear a human voice for the first time' (*UP* 46). Penelope's singing touched a chord of desire that ran deeper than the immediate occasion.

> It was another world. One that took me back to that summer in Bar Harbor when I first looked into Jowett's Plato. I was about eighteen. It was an incredible experience which had no breaks, no contrast. From the first Dialogue to the last my feet did not seem to touch the ground, and wherever I went I had the sensation of flying […]. I was absorbed in the many problems which Plato always evokes […]. But one problem evoked no response from me. It left me dull and sad, so that only through the will to forget it could I regain the strange equilibrium which the rest of the work gave me. What did music mean to Plato? This distress which I had shrouded in Bar Harbor, because the Platonic wind was then carrying me above the earth, was not securely buried. It remained a blind and dark alley in my inner

> being; and every once in a while I would wrestle with it in this darkness, as a ghost might wrestle to recover the consciousness of a beating heart, and warm blood flowing. (*UP* 49-50)

This scene features an intellectual and emotional turning point, while it represses the sexual one of Eva's burning desire for Natalie as the two studied Plato together that same summer.[20] The narrative connects what preceded – her early years and the dead-end course she had met in Paris – with what would follow – the direction her life would take after she settled Greece. Everything becomes bound up with her desire to recover ancient music – a sound irrevocably lost without a trace for the modern researcher. In Eva's telling of the story, the problem she had repressed when she was studying Greek in Bar Harbor – the question of music and voice – came back to haunt her after she heard Penelope sing. It inspired her to leave behind all that was familiar for a world of artistic exploration in Paris.

There she surrounded herself with people she found to be 'incomparably more interesting and entertaining' than her Bryn Mawr circle (*UP* 37-38). Although the autobiography summarises the Paris years as a series of false starts that would eventually bring her to choose a different course, these false starts are worth rehearsing because they suggest something of Palmer's artistic pedigree. She certainly did not leave empty handed from her work in theatre, even though she remembers her story differently. Paris gave her the opportunity to work with innovative artists. There was Sarah Bernhardt's invitation to play Mélisande to Bernhardt's Pelléas in Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist play, *Pelléas et Mélisande* in the Frohman theatre in New York. Then Colette and Palmer were 'slated to act the 'Dialogue au Soleil Couchant' by Pierre Louÿs' in Natalie Barney's garden. During an interlude in Scotland, Palmer found herself opposite Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree in a performance of *Hamlet* (*UP* 43). Lastly, the famous British actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell – who, a decade later, would be the inspiration for Bernard Shaw's Eliza Doolittle opposite Tree's Henry Higgins – invited Palmer to join her theatre company, an invitation Eva later recalled that she reluctantly had to turn down because of a personal, ethical disagreement.[21]

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[20] In unpublished memoirs, Barney reportedly writes of ties she developed with Eva from the time they met at 18 years old at Bar Harbor, 'where poetry, Plato's *Symposium* and nudism had their place in an Arcadian life. We came to know the sexual pleasure of nudity among the springs and brooks of the forest'. See Papadaki, *Grammata*, p. 13, quoting Jean Chalon reconstruction of those autobiographical notes in, *Portrait d'une séductrice* [Portrait of a Seductress] (Paris: Stock, 1976), p. 30.

[21] Mrs. Campbell attached a condition to the invitation. 'She made it clear that, in order to act with her, I should have to give up a friend of mine in Paris of whom she disapproved […]. She said that the offer she was making me would put me within one leap on the top notch of

Besides these contacts, the modernist theatre scene in Paris also seems to have contributed to Palmer's belief that artists bear the responsibility to find a powerful form of expression for changing times, indeed, to revolutionise form so as to move people to feel and think freely as human beings. Like other artists of her era, Eva Palmer would devote a lifetime to developing a new form for drama. Even as she delved deeper into not just ancient Greek drama but traditional Greek weaving, dance, and music reaching into Byzantium, her final objective was to re-imagine the theatre as both a total work of art and a social catalyst with a liberating force. Thus Eva wrote about her experiments in theatre: 'The kind of theatre I was dreaming about is the thing, if greatly used, which can liberate simultaneously all the faculties of man, and also direct them to noble uses. It is essentially beyond local barriers and boundaries, and can lift us, if anything can, into that Panic of insight and love which alone can make man sane' (*UP* 193). But Paris left her sceptical that she could find the 'theatre-consciousness' she was looking for there. Palmer's narrative speculates that it may not have been just ethical compulsion that forced Palmer to turn away. 'Was there in me a sub-consciousness that I was not really on my own right path? Faced with a rare-opportunity which was closing in on me, did the theatre, as I knew it then, suddenly seem very small; and was I merely clearing the way for the growth in me for another theatre-consciousness of which then I had no knowledge?' (*UP* 45). *Upward Panic* thus prepares its readers for the critical narrative turn. Here was Eva reckoning with childhood dreams. Here she was discovering that unconventional artists could be tethered to convention. Here she was 'clearing the way' for something new.

Grounds for Another Theatre-Consciousness

Not long before Eva Palmer arrived in Athens, the cultural life of the capital city was in turmoil, as intellectuals, poets, and audiences of all backgrounds clashed over how to bring the present in line with the Greek past and which layers of the past to valorise.[22] Some sought outright revival of the classical world. Others upheld the importance of the Byzantine Orthodox tradition, an important transition from pagan to Christian Greece. Some emphasised the

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a professional career, that I was not likely to get another such chance' (*Upward Panic*, p. 44). Although Palmer does not name the 'friend' in her autobiography, Rodriguez conjectures that Campbell was referring to Barney (*Wild Heart*, p. 20).

[22] A detailed discussion of this topic with references to specific Greek authors can be found in Artemis Leontis, *Topographies of Hellenism: Mapping the Homeland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), Chapter 3 (pp. 67-99).

contribution of the rural folk, with their living traditions of dance, dress, and song suggesting a line of continuity from antiquity to the present. Others followed European trends; very few tried to combine everything in an idiosyncratic mix. In the crossfire of purposes, two violent demonstrations stand out. In 1901 a *demotic* (vernacular Greek) translation of the New Testament set off a public disturbance, as rioters perceived the translation as an assault on the integrity of Greek. Why should a living language require translation? Those responsible for the translation, however, wanted the church language to be more comprehensible. They identified demotic Greek as a 'natural language' evolving directly from classical and Koiné Greek. The same battle was fought over a demotic translation of an Aeschylus's *Oresteia.* At issue was a performance in 1903 by the Royal Theatre directed by Thomas Oikonomou. The performance drew on a three-act version of the play adapted by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and performed in Berlin in 1900 with a chorus piece accompanied by music of Mendelssohn. Yiorgos Sotiriadis translated Wilamowitz's adaptation into the meter and language of Greek folk songs. Students from the University of Athens, led by classicist Georgios Mistriotis, protested the translation.[23] They 'marched against the Royal Theatre of Athens to stop the Sunday-night performance. The police blocked their entrance to the theatre. The ensuing scuffle claimed one life and wounded several others'.[24]

Riots did not stifle innovation. Experiments in adapting Greek drama for contemporary audiences continued, inspired by a constellation of factors. First was a developing vernacular trend in the arts, which centred on bringing Greek literature into the language of the people. Second, nostalgia for village life was gnawing at the hearts of a growing urban population. Third, folklorists were collecting folk music, dance, poetry, and customs, which, they believed, preserved remnants of Hellenism from ancient times. Fourth there was growing interest in adapting 'to modern Greek realities the techniques and spirit […] found in Strindberg, Ibsen, Chekhov, Maeterlinck,

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[23] It should be noted that that not all vernacular performances of ancient Greek drama drew riots in the same time period. Kostas Georgousopoulos covers the ups and downs of audience response in 'E anaviose tou archaiou ellenikou dramatos ston 20o aiona' [The revival of ancient Greek drama in the 20th century], in *Oi chreseis tes archaiotetas apo to neo Ellenismo* [The uses of antiquity by Neohellenism], proceedings from conference, 14 and 15 April 2000 (Athens: Etaireia Spoudon Neoellenikou Politismou, 2002), pp. 41-49.

[24] Stratos E. Constantinidis, 'Classical Drama in Modern Greece', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 5.1 (May 1987), 15-32 (p. 23). See also Kostas Georgousopoulos, 'The Interpretation of Ancient Drama in Greece during the Twentieth Century', *Greek Classical Theatre, Its Influence in Europe* (Athens: Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Athens, 1993), pp. 103-125 (p. 104).

and other European playwrights'.[25] Fifth one finds in Greece, as in Ireland, Russia, and so many places in between, a fascination with the question of how to combine words and music in drama, a symbolist preoccupation.[26] Last but equally important (and certainly related to symbolism's appeal), Wagner's and especially Nietzsche's ideas about drama were very much in the air. Innovations in dance, literature, music, and drama abroad did not escape the attention of Greeks working in Greece. It should also be mentioned that fine actors were getting professional training, writers offering new plays, directors giving more attention to the dramatic details of staging plays. Despite the limitations some critics wanted to place on performances, especially revivals of ancient plays, theatre in Greece seems to have been thriving.

Penelope and Angelos Sikelianos were not far from the centres of innovation. Both had brief careers in acting. Angelos wrote plays, some with tragic themes.[27] Most important, their cosmopolitan circle introduced them to artists from abroad. They met Isadora and Raymond Duncan when the Duncans first visited Greece in 1902. Raymond had organised the Duncans' first tour of Greece. Steeped in Greek myths and legends, he tried to make the family pilgrimage as primitive as possible. Accordingly, he chartered a fishing boat filled with goat cheese, black olives, and dried fish. When the boat reached land at Kravara on the north shore of the Gulf of Corinth, Isadora and Raymond kissed the ground and embraced Greece's living inhabitants. In Athens, Isadora mounted 'with prayerful feet toward the Parthenon'.[28] She took full advantage of the open-air theatre suggested by the contours of the Parthenon, with its grand steps and immense columns. Her famous barefoot dance on the Acropolis expressed her search for an

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[25] George Thaniel 'Modern Greece', in *Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, ed. by Martin Banham. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). p. 448.

[26] In Greece, symbolist Konstantinos Christomanos directed the *Nea Skini* theatre company in Athens in order to usher in experimental theatre He also wrote symbolist prose and drama and translated ancient Greek drama 'in free verse reminiscent of Claudel's attempts'. See Kostas Georgousopoulos, 'E anaviose tou archaiou ellenikou dramatos ston 20o aiona', p. 43.

[27] *O Dithyramvos to Rodou* [The Dithyramb of the Rose] (1932), *Sivylla* [Sibyl] (1940), *O Daidalos sten Krete* [Daidalus in Crete] (1943). For discussions of these and other plays by Sikelianos see Stratos E. Constantinidis, *Modern Greek Theatre. A Quest for Hellenism* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2001), Ch. 4, 'A Satanist Agenda for the Rebirth of Hellenism', pp. 111-44 and Eusevia Chasape-Christodoulou, *E ellenike mythologia sto neoelleniko drama. Apo ten epoche tou Kretikou Theatrou eos to telos tou 20ou aiona* [Greek mythology in modern Greek drama. From the age of Cretan theatre to the end of the 20th century] Volume I (Athens: University Studio Press, 2002), pp. 694-724.

[28] Isadora Duncan, 'The Parthenon' [1903 and 1904], in *The Art of Dance*, ed. by Sheldon Cheney (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1969), p. 64.

anatomically grounded style 'to express the feeling of the human body in relation to the Doric column'.[29] On another occasion she and Raymond found inspiration in the ruins of the theatre of Dionysus when they heard boys singing some traditional songs. Hearing in their 'shrill boys' voices' the enduring sounds of an old Greek chorus, they determined to hire the boys to perform in the chorus of an ancient play.[30] They performed the play in Vienna, Munich, and Berlin without critical success. Throughout Isadora and Raymond Duncan's 'Greek' period, Penelope and Angelos Sikelianos stood by, supporting, enabling, inspiring, and occasionally offering alternative solutions, which the Duncans usually ignored.[31]

This was the creative ground that Palmer was entering. What she carried with her were some of the usual encumbrances of travellers to Greece. Like other men and women of her era, class, and origins, she had well-developed notions about ancient Greece, which her education had bequeathed and artistic aspirations had refined. Unlike most other travellers, however, Palmer developed an aural more than a visual awareness. Thus she learned to give the voice of living Greeks a close hearing. Her attention was not fixed on the sights of Greece – visions of a still, classical landscape filled with silent monuments and artefacts that confirmed Greece's past glories – at the expense of its sounds – a discouraging cacophony of syllables and pitch that expressed an incomprehensible present. Most of Greece's briefest visitors absorb the country through their eyes. They play the 'Greek' protagonist against the fractured scenery of a mute world. What they hear, in contrast, tends to unsettle them, with the dissonant soundtrack of a 'garrulous people', as Virginia Woolf describes it, 'loose of lip and unstable of purpose, who had parodied the speech and pilfered the name of the great for so long'.[32] So,

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29 Duncan, 'The Parthenon', p. 64.

30 'We were of the opinion, as are many distinguished Hellenists, that the hymns of Apollo, Aphrodite, and all the pagan gods had found their way through transformations into the Greek Church. Then was born in us the idea of forming once more the original Greek Chorus from these Greek boys. We held competitions each night in the Theatre of Dionysus and gave prizes to those who could present the most ancient Greek songs'. We also enlisted the services of a Professor of Byzantine music. In this way we formed a chorus of ten boys who had the most beautiful voices in all Athens. The young Seminarist, who was also a student of Ancient Greek, helped us set this chorus to *The Suppliants* of Aeschylus. These choruses are probably the most beautiful that have ever been written'. Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927), pp. 129-30.

31 As Palmer pointedly put it, 'If Isadora had had the slightest inkling of what Penelope really was, she would have followed, at least in sympathy, the necessary course: of learning the Method which underlies what those Greek boys were singing that night in the Theatre of Dionysus' (Palmer-Sikelianos, *Upward Panic*, p.186).

32 Virginia Woolf, 'Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus', ed. by S. P. Rosenbaum, *Times Literary Supplement* (11-17 September 1987), p. 979. Notable for their listening skills, in

with few exceptions, travellers tend to visit Greece with their eyes open and ears shut. Eva Palmer was one of those rare exceptions. She leaned toward Greece with a sensitive ear. She heard in Penelope Sikelianos 'the personification of Greek music' (*UP* 186), the key to her powerful presence. Palmer also attended to the singing of peasants. 'I often heard peasants singing in remote parts of Greece which were still uninfluenced by recent Athenian fashions […]. [T]he songs of the peasants […] were quite as remarkable as hers, and it was from the peasants that she herself had learned what she knew' (*UP* 93). Likewise she responded to Angelos Sikelianos's voice: 'It affected me very much as Penelope's singing had when I first hear her. All former impressions were wiped out, I wanted only to hear him talk' (*UP* 58). She took pleasure in listening to Angelos speak Greek: 'the sense of what he was saying became lost in the sound of it. But I knew then that, however fine in French, the sound of his own language was incomparably better. So I asked them to go on talking in Greek. This time I gave myself up to the pleasure of it' (*UP* 61). Everywhere she expressed the need for one to 'tune one's ears at a distance to the mountain echoes and the open spaces' (*UP* 132). She heard in Greece audible voices, breathing spirits, living pulses, the sounds of the landscape, and a complex musical system.

All these sounds required time to absorb. They ran against old ways of hearing things. 'There were too many years of opposite notions in my brain. There was too old a habit of thinking of music in a totally different way' (*UP* 93). The prospect of breaking old habits was especially attractive to one who had actively pursued a change in sensibility, a change in consciousness. It was reason enough to suspend her journey: to make the world of contemporary Greece her laboratory in her search for 'another theatre consciousness'. Thus, at least, Palmer-Sikelianos remembers her gradual awakening.

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contrast, are Byron, who attended to both song and dance, and Patrick Leigh Fermor, whose writings are filled with references to sounds and music. I would also single out Henry Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi* (New York: New Directions, 1958) not only for its oft-cited account of Katsimbalis setting off the cocks' crowing in Athens, but for this wonderful description: 'Approaching a lonely house lit up by a smoky kerosene lamp we are suddenly arrested by the queer strains of a flute. We hasten our steps and stand in the middle of the wide street to take in the performance. The door of the house is open, revealing a room filled with men listening to an uncouth figure playing the flute. The man seems to be exalted by his own music, a music such as I have never heard before and probably never will again. It seems like sheer improvisation and, unless his lungs give out, there promises to be no end to it. It is the music of the hills, the wild notes of the solitary man armed with nothing but his instrument. It is the original music for which no notes have been written and for which none is necessary. It is fierce, sad, obsessive, yearning and defiant. It is not for men's ears but for God's. It is a duet in which the other instrument is silent' (p. 213).

Over time, her patience with Greece's inscrutable, live soundtrack reoriented her approach to Greece's mute sources of ancient drama. It helped her to develop a new approach to reviving classical drama, which engaged practically with tools found in contemporary Greek reality while bracketing archaeological questions. Not unlike Greece's demoticists, who saw vernacular Greek as 'the living embodiment of its ancient predecessor',[33] she approached Greece's speech, music, dance and practices as the living embodiment of a functional tradition. She never argued for the antiquity of those practices: 'My own musical thesis is in no way a plea for the actual antiquity of any song existing in Greece today, either in or out of the church. It is not possible that any ecclesiastical or traditional tune be exactly like any ancient tune because the words have changed more or less, and Greek melody then and now, depends on the meaning and emphasis of words' (*UP* 218-19). What she found instead was a contemporary context for cultivating artistic expression for the present day, something to approximate an older order through its achievement of an analogous artistic integrity. Working through this context, she aimed to produce 'not a slavish imitation, but a new creation of our own on the same rock formation' (*UP* 220).

The prelude to her approach to drama can be found in experiments in weaving she and the Duncans conducted while still living in Paris. They wanted to learn 'how to make modern stuff look Greek'. They approached the question not as an archaeologist would – by searching through evidence that suggested how ancient Greeks wove their cloth – but from the perspective of a living Greek facing a loom. With a tool designed and built by Raymond Duncan to look like looms he had seen in Greek villages, the three friends wove until they able to reproduce the desired effect. When an archaeologist later ratified her theory, having come upon an artefact with traces of a shroud that matched her own pattern of weave, she found pleasure in 'this astonishing ratification' (*UP* 49), gave credit to Raymond Duncan, and brushed off the notion that she knew anything about ancient weaving.

Her approach to the reviving Greek tragedy in the amphitheatre at Delphi in 1927 followed the same line of thinking, though it brought together many more threads. The direction Palmer gave to the tragedy proceeded from a theory of tragedy she was developing.[34] At its centre was the primary role

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[33] Geoffrey C. Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and Its Speakers* (London and New York: Longman, 1997), p. 352.

[34] Palmer conveyed some of her ideas about Greek drama her letters to Joan Vanderpool and Ted Shawn. In *Upward Panic*, pp. 103-42, she outlined the theory of ancient drama that supported her methods. Other plays she directed were Aeschylus's *Suppliants* for the second Delphic Festival in 1930 and Euripides' *Bacchae* at Smith College and Bryn Mawr College in 1934 and 1935 respectively. She prepared performances of Aeschylus' *The Persians* and

she gave to the chorus. Unlike directors of classical revivals who tend to reduce the size and role of the chorus as they focus dramatic attention on the contest between individual characters, Sikelianos placed an enlarged, choreographed, fully synchronised, chanting chorus at the heart of the drama. For her, understanding the role of the chorus in a tragedy amounted to nothing less than understanding the power of citizens in a democracy. These were analogous, she believed, so that finding the drama, harmony, beauty, and intelligence in the chorus was like finding those same qualities in 'groups of people, nations, races' who lived in her own time (*UP* 130). She was not the first to express the belief that the chorus in tragedy really matters.[35] But she was the first to face the problem of its staging. To her advantage, Palmer had a still protagonist in Prometheus and a magnificent outdoor amphitheatre overlooking the Mediterranean in the ancient theatre of Delphi. The semi-circular stage was ideally designed for keeping the centre of the drama in view while a large group of actors moved in unison around the stage. 'There is something which brings out a natural magnetic power in having an audience placed around a circle and looking down at a point which is their own centre instead of looking up at a flat perspective which is separated from them', Palmer would later write.[36]

Still she had to give the chorus music and movement, two lost ancient arts. Here her theory of drama combined with her practical spirit and developing knowledge of contemporary Greece served her well. Her goal was *not* to be strictly correct from an archaeological or philological standpoint, but to reproduce the effect of ancient drama. She believed that ancient drama used living forms, with the sound and movement of the chorus around Prometheus communicating feelings of complaint, dismay, mourning directly to an ancient audience. To achieve the same effect on a modern audience, Palmer reasoned that she should also use living, functioning forms of the Greek language, music, and dance. She chose spoken Greek for the text,[37] Byzantine church music to give pitch and voice to the chorus's words, and traditional dances she had learned from villagers to give the chorus's words movement, and hand-woven fabrics to dress her actors. Her idea was to approach these art forms from within, that is to say, from the feeling and

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Aristophanes' *Peace* in New York City for the Federal Theater Project in 1937, but the project never saw the stage as Palmer-Sikelianos received a notice of termination from the FTP.

35 For Palmer's readings of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, see *UP* 106, 171-74.

36 Palmer-Sikelianos, *Letters by Eva Palmer-Sikelianos on Ancient Drama*, p. 186.

37 She and Sikelianos selected a modern Greek translation, which they considered a better alternative to performing the play in ancient Greek, something that could only bring discord – since a Greek audience would react in shock to an Erasmian recitation while non-Greek Hellenists would wince at the sound of ancient words pronounced like modern Greek.

rhythm of the words. Here her developing knowledge of living Greek traditions and of the Duncans' staging of Aeschylus's *Suppliants* some twenty years earlier both served her. From Penelope Sikelianos, Palmer had learned how the Duncans set words to music. That process was firmly in her mind. Yet something did not rest well with her now that she had learned Byzantine music from the performer's side. It was Palmer's conviction that the method of ecclesiastical chanting was the key to the performance of the ancient chorus: it offered melody and rhythm, but nothing more – exactly as Greek drama required. Furthermore, it taught one to find the melody in the words rather than to put words to music. Accordingly she asked Konstantine Psachos, her teacher of Byzantine music 'Leader of Music of the Great Church of Christ' by the Ecumenical Patriarch, to provide her with a range of Byzantine-style compositions. Using these as a guide, she connected music to words by finding the melody and rhythm in the words, a process she had learned from Psachos following her initiation to Greek music by Penelope Sikelianos. For the dance, she began with sketches of gestures from Greek vases. These she presented to a group of Greek women familiar with folk dances. She taught the women the musical line, rhythm, and gestures aligned with certain phrases, then asked them to adjoin these with steps from a traditional *syrtos*, a dance performed in a semi-circle. They worked closely to develop and synchronise their movements and singing. Together director and actors produced one of the most precise, disciplined, and exciting Greek choruses that ever appeared in a modern revival.[38]

Palmer was pleased to hear classicists ratify her artistic direction; but she stopped short of agreeing with them that she had revived ancient drama with archaeological accuracy. When an archaeologist approached her after the first performance of *Prometheus Bound* to congratulate her for having 'solved archaeological problems which we have been working on for years', she protested. Her autobiography reports her answer:

> I have done nothing of the kind. I have read archaeological books only to forget them, and I never thought of your problem. And besides […] the performance was bristling with archaeological mistakes, but even you did not detect them, and you are not conscious of them even now. And that is because the play was […] emotionally true, or almost true – and that was sufficient to make even you feel that it was correct archaeologically. But there is no such thing as archaeological correctness. There is nothing in Greek drama except the emotional true and consistency of the performers, and the immense responding emotion of those who are present. The faculties of the actors, the chorus and the audience in the great

[38] For a discussion of Palmer's staging of *Prometheus Bound*, see my 'Mediterranean *Theoria*: A View from Delphi', published in a special issue of *Thesis Eleven* V. 67, 'Mediterranean: Theories and Histories', co-edited with Peter Murphy (November 2001), 101-17.

> circular theatre become one, and form an overwhelming magnetic force. It is a tidal wave which nothing can resist; not even archaeological consciousness (*UP* 113-14).

Herein lies a succinct summary of Eva Palmer's approach. Archaeological correctness did not move her. Just as she learned from her first encounter with Greeks that she should not expect Greek behaviour to fit onto the procrustean bed of her own notions about Greece, so she did not try to fit the modern performance of Greek drama on the procrustean bed of archaeological discoveries. What mattered was artistic integrity, the 'emotional truth and consistency of the performers', together with the effective use of the architecture of the stage, all coming together to produce a 'tidal wave' effect on the audience. To develop these things took commitment and time. First, it could not happen before she developed relationships with all kinds of people – artists, city-dwellers, and villagers – in Greece, so that she could come to know her audience. Second, it followed from years of experiencing the physical properties of Greek space – in this case the 'great circular theatre' at Delphi, which mirrored the amphi-theatrical structure of the landscape. Third, it required that she internalise the forms of artistic expression both actors and audience relied on in Greece to communicate their feelings and beliefs. The 'new theatre-consciousness' she achieved in that performance of *Prometheus Bound* in 1927 and again in 1930, something she distinguished sharply from 'archaeological correctness', could not have taken less than the quarter century she devoted to living in Greece.

A Distinctive Journey?

Eva Palmer's Greek journey ended when she ran out of money. Here is one point of convergence with other better-known journeys. But in other respects her story does not fit the profile of people of means who found themselves on the move in the modern world. It is even hard to find a word to describe her journey. [39]

Of terms currently in usage, 'exile' and 'tourist' mark two ends in the spectrum of modern experiences of mobility. They stand on opposite ends of

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[39] Caren Kaplan discusses contradictory patterns of signification and usage of these terms in *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), chapter 1, 'The Question of Moving'. She cites Malcolm Cowley's *Exiles Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* as the classic work on expatriates, especially in its probing of the contradictions of American expatriation in the inter-War period. She refers to Paul Fussell's *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (1980) as the quintessential defence of travellers who would distinguish themselves from tourists.

signification in relation to the time one spends in an unfamiliar place, the desire one invests in the place of arrival, the level of self-awareness one gains through mobility. The exile and the tourist are dissimilar in most respects except their shared feelings of displacement. On one end, exiles endure an extended stay but never forget the painful separation from a more authentic life elsewhere. On the other end, tourists parcel out money and leisure in exchange for souvenirs of an authentic life they barely make the effort to discover. Somewhere in between are 'travellers', people who work hard to distinguish themselves from tourists by trying to fit into the places they visit. Travellers aspire to higher things: superior knowledge, authentic experiences, a longer stay, better-written accounts, and distinction from those who remained at home. Not far from travellers are expatriates, who enjoy an indefinite stay in their chosen destination. Expatriates, like travellers, chose their destinations; yet they imitate exiles by investing in a 'transcendental homelessness'. Like exiles, they 'represent melancholic seekers after a lost substance or unity that can never be attained'.[40]

But Palmer's expatriate uprootedness disappeared once she arrived in Greece. At least in her autobiography, one does not find in any of the commonplaces of most expatriate writing of the time: 'an almost nihilistic distancing from any connection or commitment except to the project of experiencing "otherness."'[41] In her remembrance of Greece, she seems neither to have felt like an exile nor to have behaved like a tourist – even when she criticised American intellectual life or celebrated what she found exceptional in Greek culture. What stands out is her emotional connection, which remained from beginning to end a foundation for her artistic work, even after Greece had become a physical and social reality rather than just an imaginary and literary topos. Her Greek journey made Greece her home on many levels: it was the place where she married, raised a son, baptised a grandson, buried a sister-in-law, dealt with civil servants, developed an approach to staging Greek drama, experienced deep disappointments as well as exhilarating successes, and spent all of her inheritance. In Greece she applied herself to learning from everyone around her, whether uneducated lay people from villages or educated elites in Athens. All kinds of living bodies, penetrating voices modified her lines her thinking. The contours of built and natural space reoriented her; the gestures of people everywhere reshaped her movements. The course of all she experienced altered precious notions she

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[40] Kaplan, *Questions of Travel*, p. 64. For a discussion of early twentieth-century expatriates as a 'wandering, culturally inquisitive group', see Malcom Bradbury, 'The Cities of Modernism', in *Modernism*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp. 96-104 (p. 101).

[41] Kaplan, *Questions of Travel*, p. 46.

had carried with her to Greece, but did not cool her passion for Greece. Like other modernists of her generation, she remained obsessively concerned with refining the craft and form of her art. Unlike them, she embraced various aspects of her adopted homeland as a nurturing wellspring for that craft – something that separated her from more famous expatriates and probably contributed to the marginalisation of her work.

Byron saw Greeks as 'plausible rascals'[42] and so committed himself to their political cause. Patrick Leigh Fermor famously tells of having fallen in love with Greece when he found himself among Sarakatsan nomads in the 1930s; after a few years, he fought with Cretans in the Greek resistance, and years later, he made his home in Mani.[43] Perhaps most instructive is the lesser-known case of Sheelagh Kanelli, British author of *Earth and Water*, who beautifully relates how she adjusted to life in Kalamata after marrying a Greek lawyer.[44] Interestingly, some of the most challenging tests, adjustments to marriage and housekeeping made more difficult by the limited roles available to a woman in the Greek countryside in the 1950s move Kanelli to a more sympathetic engagement with the people and the land. Kanelli's story converges with Palmer's not just on the fact that both women married Greek men and settled into life Greece. Like Palmer's, Kanelli's muse was not restless. Instead she was steadfast and curious, for both women found ways to cultivate their ideals in a finite universe.

Perhaps a minor modification in the study of travel – and especially women's travel – is necessary for one to understand the unique contribution of writers such as Kanelli or, more dramatic, the forgotten story of the American choreographer, director, composer, and theorist Eva Palmer. I would like to suggest that 'displacement' and other terms used to name a loss of connection are only one set of the many possible sensations that can overcome a person living away from home. While it is true that 'homelessness', whether actual or imagined, has inspired some purple prose in our era, melancholic disengagement from the immediately surrounding world is not the only source of inspiration. Moreover, attachments and their consequences are a driving force in women's travel. Eva Palmer's story, at least, shows that her movements followed her need to feel that she was making a positive contribution, even as she was running away from other things.

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42 Lord Byron, Letter to Henry Drury dated 3 May 1810, in *The Norton Book of Travel*, ed. by Paul Fussell (New York and London: Norton, 1987), pp. 291-93 (p. 292).

43 Patrick Leigh Fermor, *Mani: Travels in the Southern Peloponnese* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984).

44 Sheelagh Kanelli, *Earth and Water: A Marriage into Greece* (New York: Coward McCann, 1965).

I return to one last moment in Eva Palmer's autobiography. An evocative scene, it barely requires comment. The year is 1933. Eva Palmer was preparing to return to America – temporarily, she hopes – in order to raise money for an international centre at Delphi. Greece had changed her. She had also changed Greece.[45] One change she brought to Greece might be viewed with bitter irony. She suggests that Greece's cheap touristic commodification in the second half of the twentieth century may have been inescapable, even as she had worked so hard to raise awareness in 'intelligent travellers' of the quality of Greek crafts but herself refused to reap profits from the country's assets or turn them into a souvenir. Just before leaving Greece, Palmer joined a committee formed to increase the sale of Greek products at home and abroad, something Palmer advocated. At a committee meeting, she spoke of the assets she had discovered in Greece. She mentioned the precedent of the Delphic Festivals. She suggested that Greece could develop its cultural capital and sell traditional goods. Out of these there would arise a tourist industry that would attract 'the pick of intelligent travellers': 'On the one hand it is a country whose history, climate, topography, and archaeological remains attract a class of people who are apt to be the pick of intelligent travellers. On the other hand, Greece is still a nation of craftsmen, capable of producing a great variety of objects which cannot be made in other places, and which intelligent travellers like to buy. This was triumphantly demonstrated at both Festivals' (*UP* 141). She therefore argued that Greece might benefit by promoting to 'intelligent travellers' both its sites and its hand-made materials. A few days later 'the committee ordered and installed an electric sign, so huge that it covered the whole side of the beautiful hill of Lycabettos: 'BUY GREEK PRODUCTS'. And it flared every night, effectively changing Athens into Broadway. Perhaps the ugliness […] of the electric sign was one of the reasons which made my thoughts again turn to New York' (*UP* 142).

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[45] Eva Palmer and Angelos Sikelianos are given credit for reintroducing to Greece open-air performances in ancient theatres. After Delphi, annual festivals featuring productions of Greek tragedy and comedy in vernacular Greek gradually took shape at the Herodeion and the theatre at Epidaurus. These have become mainstays of the summer (tourist) season.

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Christina Dokou

‘No Place Like Home’: Gillian Bouras and the ‘Others’

Abstract

This essay argues against the theoretical assumption that the female traveller took on a masculine stance towards non-Westerners, based on endoterritorial positions (inside the sphere of imperial influence), as opposed to exoterritorial movement through the ‘Other’s’ terrain. Instead, literary and mythical precedents suggest that the traveller more often than not is feminised, or cast as a figure exposed to weakness, dependency and a fundamental homelessness. The paradoxes and complexities of this paradigm are exposed in Gillian Bouras’s semi-autobiographical *Aphrodite and the Others* (1994). The novel works through the author’s gender trouble as she finds herself as a ‘foreign bride’ in a backward Greek village, where she assumes the subjugated role patriarchy reserves for women. To counter that position, Bouras invokes her own imperium, literacy, and, from this fictional endoterritoriality, displaces her illiterate mother-in-law and Greek women like her into ‘foreign’ print, in a reverse strategy of feminisation.

Mapping the field

Recent studies of travel literature about non-Western lands have noted the tendency for the travelling subject, male or female, to assume a masculine gender position. Efterpi Mitsi’s work on British women travellers in Greece reveals a near-ubiquitous assumption by those travellers of a status of racial and/or cultural superiority that sets them apart in terms both physical and mental, analogous to the way men in patriarchy are supposed to be superior to women.[1] Looking at the larger picture, as Edward Said has shown in *Orientalism*, all structures of authority, including those present in the Western view of ‘the Orient’, share some common characteristics,[2] which feminist scholars have also identified in patriarchal discourses on women. Male travellers have consistently been found to feminise the Other in a variety of ways, while women travellers set themselves up, or are viewed by the natives as, ‘honorary men’. In Antoinette M. Burton’s words, ‘few historians today would disagree that a sense of national and racial superiority based on Britain’s imperial status was an organising principle of Victorian culture’, including the relation of British women to their Indian

1 Efterpi Mitsi, ‘“Roving Englishwomen”: Greece in Women’s Travel Writing’, *Mosaic*, 35 (2002), 129-44.

2 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

counterparts.[3] This superiority was not necessarily expressed with contempt, but could be detected either in a kindly patronising attitude, or even in the eager wish of the visitor to discover the 'hidden sides' of the visited culture, which for some is the *raison d'être* of travelling. According to Meyda Yegenoglu, 'Western women, as the excluded other of Western men, nevertheless occupy a masculine position in relation to Oriental women',[4] for a Western voy(ag)eur's wish to lift the oriental veil, to enter the harem or the public baths, their 'desire to see and the desire to penetrate this 'unknown' and 'unknowable' domain also positions the subject of representation as masculine'.[5]

The sun never set on the British Empire, and powerful embassies, consulates, military bases, merchant companies, private *émigré* societies and sizable groups of rich seasonal travellers or deliberate expatriates, each with their own courts, stood ready to receive the 'solitary' traveller and make them feel 'at home'. One can safely suppose that, had not the weight and colonial structures of the empire been with them, to open doors and guarantee privileges and safe passage, provide guides, interpreters and dragomans, and bypass all local particularities, the number of women travellers might be negligible. It is not so much, therefore, that those women express a masculine point of view, but that they are agents, catalysts, or carriers within a system that bespeaks masculinity for them. Since they never truly exit their metropolitan structures, but merely extend them, many of these travellers adopt inevitably this imperialist masculine discourse; thus not only are they 'in drag', language-wise, but their very locus as regards its foreignness, its exoticism, is a kind of 'Otherness-in-drag', for it is not exactly Other, and it is not exactly home either – a home of which they, as women (and second class citizens), are not exactly typical metonymies while away from it.

One could argue therefore that the masculinisation of the (female) traveller is the product of a particular set of historico-cultural circumstances and should be treated as such; it furthermore reflects a much wider view of

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[3] Antoinette M. Burton,'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and "The Indian Woman", 1865-1915', in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, ed. by Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press,1992), pp. 137-57 (p. 137). See also Barbara N. Ramusack, 'Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945', in Chaudhuri and Strobel, pp. 119-36; Susan L. Blake, 'A Woman's Trek: What Difference Does Gender Make?', in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, ed. by Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 19-34.

[4] Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 12.

[5] Yegenoglu, p. 90.

the travelling experience that includes the pre-existing context as well as the post-experiential reflection: the nineteenth-century commentaries with their desire for a cultural 'phallic substitute' or the twentieth-century penchant for theoretical hegemony and order. That opens up the interesting possibilities for variations on the theme in cases when any or all of the above provisos are not operating: under conditions of stressful strangeness, when a travelling subject happens to lose his/her colonial assurances and the transfer to the new environment generates apprehension in the face of the unknown, when the safe return to homeland is not guaranteed and when the mentality of the subject is considered at the (approximate) moment of the experience, then it may be possible that the masculine posture of superior assurance is damaged rather than reinforced, without this prohibiting the possibility for a patriarchal *lysis* to the *peripeteia* later on. In other words, perhaps the traveller is first and foremost 'feminised' by the travelling experience as such, meaning that their dependency 'on the kindness of strangers', and therefore on skills of mediation, propitiation and negotiation rather than subjugation, their ignorance of local social and civic mechanisms, their anxiety-inducing homelessness, their loss for words and, often, their physical weakness reflects the essentialist – and stereotypical in patriarchy – view of woman as dependent, weak, restricted, silent, hysteric, and eventually in need for a return to the protective custody of man. After all, as Anne McClintock notes, the idea of imperial nationalism that the Western traveller represents in the nineteenth century means different things for the two sexes:

> Women are represented as the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking and natural), embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity. Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity (forward-thrusting, potent and historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary principle of discontinuity.[6]

The above qualities imposed on women, coupled with what Yegenoglu calls the 'temporal lag' imposed on representations of the Orient as similarly backward, primitive and atavistic,[7] suggest the possibility of 'contamination' by an extra dose of femininity in an environment that shares those traits, and therefore make even more imperative the need for endoterritorial or endoimperialist 'masculine' strictures that will safeguard wayward damsels from degeneration.[8] This possibility of feminisation due to travel is the thesis

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6 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), p.359.

7 Yegenoglu, p. 98.

8 That would be a kind of overcompensating 'masculinisation in drag', like the carnivalesque, excessive femininity of drag queens.

this essay aims to explore, by offering an alternative, microcosmic view of the cultural mechanics of travelling. As a case study, I will use a text by a twentieth-century author that fits several requirements for unusual circumstances, while being easily categorisable within the 'foreign bride' tradition: the Australian author Gillian Bouras's award-winning novel, *Aphrodite and the Others* (1994). While scholars like Helga Ramsey-Kurz see in Bouras's Greek experience a subversion of great expectations about 'the cradle of [western] civilisation',[9] one must note that the same reversal of expectations has branded the experience of a host of northern European travellers to nineteenth-century pre-revolutionary Greece. Besides, Ramsey-Kurz notes, as Bouras's memoir is delivered though the same 'conspiracy' of inscription in which writing agents of British colonisation 'traditionally either demonise or victimise the illiterate subject to the end of reaffirming the desirability of universal literacy and legitimising the literalisation of non-literate people', it ultimately verifies 'that existences lived outside the realm of letters can never be fully comprehended and contained within letters'.[10] My aim is to show that, regardless of what the text does for the contemporary reader, Bouras invokes more of the written tradition on imperialist travel than she perhaps is conscious of, and that there are reasons why even this does not really help her cope.

'To boldly go where no man has gone before'?

> Now women return from afar, from always: from 'without', from the heath where witches are kept alive; from below, from beyond 'culture; from their childhood which men have been trying desperately to make them forget, condemning it to 'eternal rest'. The little girls and their 'ill-mannered' bodies immured, well-preserved, intact unto themselves, in the mirror. Frigidified. But are they ever seething underneath![11]

In the search for precedents to the claim of feminisation for the traveller's gender, both literature and anthropology are quite supportive. It is after all in fiction that our sense of the private, emotive self comes out to play, in

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9 Helga Ramsey-Kurz, 'Inscriptions of European Wilderness: *An Imaginary Life* by David Malouf and *Aphrodite and the Others* by Gillian Bouras', in *Writing Europe 2001: Migrant Cartographies*, Cultural Travellers and New Literatures International Conference, Universiteit Leiden/ University of Amsterdam (22-24 March 2001). For a more extended discussion, see Ramsey-Kurz *The Non-Literate Other: Readings of Illiteracy in Twentieth-Century Novels in English* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 139-62.

10 Ramsey-Kurz 2001.

11 Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 334-49 (pp. 335-36).

contrast to the regulated, cultured public image that we are forced to display in our behaviour. There, even the archetypal masculine Western voyager in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) faces moments of feminine tearful weakness and a couple of near-hysteric moments. Another strapping eighteenth-century fellow, Jonathan Swift's Gulliver, finds himself subjugated as a family pet in the land of the gigantic Brobdignagians, when he, physically outclassed and incapable of being understood, is forced to serve as a human sex-toy to a group of licentious court-ladies, while his welfare depends exclusively on the goodwill of a little girl that keeps this 'freak of nature' like her 'Baby' doll. Moreover, while Byron himself and his alter ego, Childe Harold, inspired generations as the quintessential traveller of Western masculine ethos and rhetoric, his 'uncommon' hero, Don Juan, has been shown as a strong example of a feminised male whose altered gender is directly related to his status as traveller, exile, castaway, drifter, sex-slave, passive recipient of his fate.[12] Finally, as Charlotte Sussman shows in a recent article on Mary Shelley's apocalyptic *The Last Man* (1826), not only does the male protagonist, a harried refugee, strongly resemble Shelley herself,[13] but the travelling that – literally – plagues him 'underlines the difference between two meanings of the word man [...]. '[M]an, the individual' is simply another animal; man 'the lord of created nature' can only exist in numbers larger than three'[14] – in which case, doesn't the solitary traveller resemble more a 'honorary female'? Again, the mechanics of writing and the sense of an enlarged cultural context appear more important than the actual spatial displacement; nevertheless, when the latter becomes dominant, it brings with it a gender-bending toward femininity, in its subordinate relation to power, community, and discourse.

The hypothesis is also corroborated in books of boys' adventures. There, no matter how exotic the locale, the metropolitan structures of culture are always paradigmatically extended for the benefit of the young protagonist, who comes out of this adventure 'a man', but not before he is subjected to feminised positions of powerlessness, fear and confusion.[15] On the antipodes

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[12] For a detailed study of the protagonist of Don Juan as a feminised, androgynous figure, see Christina Dokou, 'Androgyny's Challenge to the 'Law of the Father': *Don Juan* as Epic-in-Reverse', in *The Lure of the Androgyne*: Special Issue of *Mosaic* 30:3 (September 1997), 1-19.

[13] Charlotte Sussman, ' "Islanded in the World": Cultural Memory and Human Mobility in *The Last Man*', *PMLA* 118.2 (March 2003), 270-301 (p. 286). See also Maria Koundoura's essay in this collection.

[14] Sussman, p. 289.

[15] Robert Lewis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894) and Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914) ostensibly maintain masculinity and colonialist supremacy by invoking the 'mother country' through tokens of

of the above genre, travelling adventures starring little girls, rare as they are, are marked by a singular weirdness of circumstances that leaves the subject permanently floundering and confused. In L. Frank Baum's 1900 children's classic, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy, before she can collect and unify all the fragmented aspects of her personality symbolised by her three odd friends and the patriarchal Wizard, she must encounter and permanently suppress her dark *anima*, the Wicked Witch of the West who, at Oz is let loose and rampant. It is a witch that sets Dorothy on her quest, and it is a witch that threatens to keep her travelling forever, by impeding the completion of the journey and the return home; so, even though closure requires a valorisation of masculinity, the journey itself is tied to the feminine factor, and the strange land to the magic of the witches. Of course, it might be argued that the escape from the endoterritorial network liberates Dorothy's hidden potential, and to insist on maintaining gender divisions outside their cultural context is an essentialist fallacy. The point, though, is precisely that the cultural and personal makeup, although interrelated, are not necessarily synchronised, and the individual will insist on her learned/gendered behaviour even when it may not be advantageous to her to continue to do so because circumstances have changed. The textbook case to the thesis developing here would be Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1864) and its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) The world Alice encounters is, like Oz and unlike the realistic settings of boys' adventures, strange beyond belief, and expected rules of culture may or, most often, may not apply, arbitrarily. To negotiate it, Alice deploys her good little girl behaviour and skills to find her way home, but that only perplexes her more, and leads her deeper into the world on the other side of the (notably vaginal) hole. The cliché, in other words, of the 'lost little girl' takes on then a much more palpable quality, since it is because of girlhood that she is/remains lost, and is subjected to 'curiouser and curiouser' riddles, jeers, entrapment, scares and death-threats. The ending of *Alice*, with the older sister intervening like a *dea ex machina* to restore order and reality, does not really provide any satisfactory dénouement. Both Oz and the Wonderland are fundamentally alien societies, with nonhuman denizens formed already into small, tight groups that make perfect sense to themselves and to each other, but are incomprehensible, even hostile and dangerous, to the travelling little girl, thus bringing into sharp relief her usual weaknesses and inability to cope. As

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civilisation or the maintenance of Western rules of behaviour. This trick of remaining endoterritorial is attacked as the 'midget in the machine' in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). The weak heroes of both books succumb to highly feminised endings.

Bouras states, there is a lot of similarity between those fantastic societies and the non-Westernised cultures in which a traveller might find herself:

> A foreigner marooned in a village discovers that there is often only one group; if one cannot be a part of it, for whatever reason, all confidence eventually evaporates and many aspects of the personality become atrophied. Sense of self is drastically impaired; in extreme cases even sanity is threatened. But of course it takes one years and years to realise what is happening.[16]

The progress of the 'disease', as identified in the above metaphor, is nothing more than the social building of an identity enforced on the individual, in exactly the same manner, and with the same traits, female gender in patriarchy is inscribed on women. The foreigner in question will therefore be made into Other, a concept that entails a kind of feminisation. This does not mean that girl characters in travel narratives may not display bravery, resolve, or other masculine traits in the face of adversity; but in the above narratives, this behaviour constitutes an authorially *gauche*, accidental aberration from the gendered norm rather than an indication of roundness of character. As Trev Broughton notes in his review of Catherine Robson's recent study on the fetishisation of the little girl image by male Victorian authors, the cultural mechanics of the era regarding gender provide a pragmatic explanation for this phenomenon, and connect femininity with a form of journeying:

> […] until relatively late in the period early childhood was perceived, among such classes as could afford a choice in the matter, as a feminine phase for both girls and boys. Intensified maternal influence and nurture, girlish clothing and the feminised social space of the nursery all combined to identify middle-class childhood as a feminine site, only to be 'breached' when, at 6 or 7, boys were sent to school […][17]

Thus manhood was conceived as a kind of return from femininity: a gendered rupture' quite 'traumatic' for the Victorian man, who then substituted his yearning for his own 'lost self' with little-girl fantasies.[18] Femininity is thus constructed as an actual journey through time – to a backwardness loved and rejected, as well as to the Other magic of childhood *loci*.

It appears, then, that the experience of travel itself, under conditions that do not guarantee the endoterritorial safety or the cultural integrity of the

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16 Gillian Bouras, *Aphrodite and the Others* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble/ Penguin Books Australia, 1994), pp. 113-14. Henceforth *AO*.

17 Trev Broughton, 'Maiden Attributes: Theorizing the Victorian Girl', rev. of *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman*, by Catherine Robson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 32.1 (2003), 91-94 (p. 91).

18 Broughton, pp. 91-92.

individual –and its return – might be more aptly symbolised not by the Romantic male wanderer but by the little lost girl. It is no coincidence that the onset of girl's adventures is usually some kind of accident, a tornado or a fall down a hole, rather than a yielding to a call for adventure, as is most often the case with male adventurers. Although travels concluded may constitute part of a gentleman's education, travelling itself as a transitory state, in its exoterritorial form, is a detour away from cultural safety that feminises the subject and must have an ending in sight if any pleasure or value is to be derived from its experience.

Yet what the literary examples intimate may be a deeper connection between the patriarchal concept of woman and travelling, something which could be discerned in primal rituals and ancient traditions worldwide. In ancient Greece, where woman was defined as the opposite of civic man, as something 'external' and wild, adolescent boys would cross-dress for the festival of Artemis, the divine virgin huntress, swerving into the dark woods of femininity before their transition to political manhood. In mythologies around the world, the greatest heroes would often detour into transvestisism before reaching the pinnacle of their exploits, and all in the context of some faraway journey.[19] In ancient Sparta, as well as in certain African or Australian aboriginal initiation ceremonies, boys are taken from the safety of the home and cast into the bush: the goal is to survive and be initiated into manhood, but the experience itself is one of having their individual weakness that they harbour in the traces of their mother's milk pressed upon them, at a stage when they are not yet men, by showing them how it can make them feel frightened, alone, and needy – of the *real* protection that only the masculine society can offer. In this travelling induction into the Law of the Father, adolescent boys are temporarily led to feel like women do – like Little Red Riding Hoods or Snow-Whites lost in the wood. After all, isn't woman, as currency in the patriarchal economies of exchange, identified as the one that travels from the father's house to her husband's, where she, as a foreign body, must submit to new and strange conditions? From that point of view, Dorothy's talisman-phrase 'there's no place like home' acquires new, and wholly sinister, semantic possibilities.

Wander(ing) woman: The Medea Model

[19] See, for instance, Achilles's hidden adolescence in Skyros as one of the king's daughters, Herakles's cross-dressing encounter with Omphale, Arjuna's last year of exile as an effeminate dance teacher in *Mahabharata*.

> As a woman I have no country, as a woman I want no country, as a woman my country is the whole world.[20]

If woman is never truly at home in patriarchy, this might mean that she travels forever, yet, unlike travelling, gender may be a habit more difficult to shed. Perhaps, according to Rosi Braidotti, such a state of perennial and conscious nomadism is a desirable, informative, ethical and critically empowering choice, 'a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity', while his/her migratory condition safeguards them from suspect ideological entrenchment.[21] It is true that, in many cases in the past, travelling for women was a form of liberation – mostly for single women with no filial obligations and some kind of income, and always in the context of 'the empire' whose authority they represented for the natives;[22] additionally, those women usually had an above-average education, 'assertive personalities', and a record of activities in the public sphere at home.[23] Nevertheless, one wonders whether, under non-privileged conditions, an exacerbated sense of femininity, caused by travelling, is something a woman would want to bear lightly: hence the 'masculinisation' tropes that some women travellers may develop as defence mechanisms in the face of prolonged 'trippin'.

One of the paradigmatic precedents to that case of feminisation as well as to the motif of the bride as travelling foreigner, is that of Medea. The princess of Iolkos, powerful witch-priestess and granddaughter of the Sun, follows Jason and the Argonauts back to Greece only to be embroiled in a series of forced removals and have her husband abandon her for the younger and richer princess-bride of Corinth. Ordered to perilous exile again, she reacts by killing her children with Jason – more to protect them from a suffering worse than death than to spite him, as Euripides would have it – and is finally triumphantly whisked off to Athens, whose king offers her sanctuary, in a dragon-drawn chariot provided by her grandfather. Meanwhile, though, she offers some of the most memorable aphorisms on the fate of women, delivered through a metaphor of perennial wandering, thus tying travel and the feminine gender together:

> [...] there is no easy escape
> For a woman, nor can she say no to her marriage.
> She arrives among new modes of behaviour and manners,

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20 Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt-Harvest, 1938), p. 109.

21 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) pp. 22-25.

22 Blake, p. 21.

23 Ramusack, pp. 128-29.

> And needs prophetic power, unless she has learnt at home,
> How best to manage him who shares the bed with her[24]

Here Medea identifies the lot of women with the experience of a traveller to a foreign – and unmanageable – land, which is for her doubly charged, as she *is* indeed a foreign wife, without a network of friends or relations, and it is because she is a woman that she suffers the violation of her rights. Outside such an endoterritorial context (unlike the Victorian woman traveller, who was not considered a 'barbarian' in relation to the natives), where her gift of 'cleverness' and knowledge of magic gave her a honoured status, these very gifts are turned against her, marking her as a threat, an object 'of envy and ill-will' that must be exiled.[25] The tragedy suggests that a woman should never risk leaving her native land, for she will regret it – precisely because an exoterritorial setting will bring to sharp relief all the disadvantages bequeathed anyway on the feminine gender. Medea's journey, like Dorothy's, has not stopped because she has acted more like a loving wife, protecting her husband against peril, rather than a diplomatic player who must not generate enmities. Her cry when she hears of her new banishment, 'O my country! How bitterly now I remember you!', is the regretting of her overwhelming passion caused by Aphrodite's 'poison of desire', according to the Chorus, and as her own admission of bad judgment to have 'trusted the words of a Greek'.[26] Thus the husband can become the enemy because he is of a different country, whose rules are unknown. Jason also makes it clear earlier that the endoterritorial advantage of Medea now works for him only, when he suggests, in an outrageous refutation of all the benefits he has derived from her, that Medea should be honoured by her predicament, just because his culture is superior to hers:

> You have certainly got from me more than you gave.
> Firstly, instead of living among barbarians,
> You inhabit a Greek land and understand our ways,
> How to live by law instead of the sweet will of force.
> And all the Greeks considered you a clever woman.
> You were honoured for it; while, if you were living at
> The ends of the earth, nobody would have heard of you.[27]

The bitter irony implicit in the sophistry that praises 'cleverness' and 'understanding' will, of course, be turned against Jason and his new household by the forever-foreign bride, when he will be defeated by her not

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[24] Euripides, p. 746, ll. 234-38.
[25] Ibid., p. 747, l. 295.
[26] Ibid., p. 758, ll. 325, 620-37, 785.
[27] Ibid., p. 752, ll. 523-29.

only in strategy but in rhetoric as well, as he begs for the corpses of his children in vain. The fact that in the end Medea returns to some degree to her former powerful status, and employs her home-spun magic arts to defeat the fact that 'women are the most unfortunate creatures'[28] suggests on the one hand that an invocation of inverse endoterritorialism may be possible by alternative means: not what the surrounding culture can bring to the traveller, but what of culture the traveller can carry within her, even barbarism among peoples who consider themselves superior.

Gillian Bouras's Travels, or, the Oz One Out

> 'I was looking at photos once. Lions, tigers, elephants, and Vangelena ordered me to shut the book. "*Agria zoa*". "Wild animals", she said. "But they're only pictures, only paper", I told her. It didn't make any difference. "We don't know the powers they may have", she said, and insisted I close the book. She didn't know anything about anything, Vangelena!' (*AO* 30)

Far removed though it may appear from the child-killing Medea, Robinson Crusoe, or ancient rites of passage, the case of Gillian Bouras comes as a most convenient encapsulation of all the above issues regarding the gender identity of the exoterritorial traveller and coping mechanisms in the face of prolonged travelling. Bouras, an Australian secondary-school teacher, married a Greek and in 1980 migrated, against her misgivings, to his ancestral village in rural Peloponnese, only painfully to discover her incompatibility with the local society, who, smug in their life-skills and sense of superior Greekness treat her more as a clueless immigrant than as a distinguished visitor: 'I have been told that I am not an expat, I am a migrant, and there is a whole world of difference'.[29] This attitude is especially represented by her mother-in-law, Aphrodite, whom Bouras has been using as a nexus of reference in her chronicling of her foreign experience in a series of five novels, as well as in various pieces of scholarly commentary and shorter fiction.[30] Even her children's story, *Saving Christmas*, short-listed for the Children's Book Awards in 2000, is about Australian Christmas being sabotaged by evil *Kallikantzaroi* (Greek lore goblins), whom the family must fight by pulling together, thus indicating both Bouras's ethnically-mixed

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[28] Euripides, p. 746, l. 229.

[29] Bouras, *Starting Again*, p.45, quoted in 'Reading Group Notes – *Starting Again*', *Penguin Books Australia*, URL: http://www.penguin.com.au/readers/groups/notes/0140281487.txt (June 2003).

[30] Mareya Schmidt, and Peter Schmidt, 'Bouras, Gillian, (1945- ', *The OzLit Site* (26 Oct. 1996), URL: http://dargo.vicnet.net.au/ozlit/writers.cfm?id=806 (June 2003).

authorial profile as well as her sense that Greek culture somehow damaged her family.[31] The majority of her work is characterised by a splicing of Greek history, local-colour and lore with an Aussie autobiographical perspective, ironically setting on record the impossibility of Bouras the person-traveller ever fitting exoterritorially into Greek culture. One of the questions asked in *Aphrodite* is 'Where are they going to bury us, the foreigners?', even if Aphrodite wryly tells Gillian: 'You're different. You're ours' (*AO* 112). Like Medea, Bouras ultimately remains *A Foreign Wife*, as the title of her 1986 book suggests (and it was only thus, ironically, that she was ever identified in Greek letters, for this was her only book translated in Greek). Like Medea, she also is unable to stop travelling, not only because twentieth-century mobility allows for frequent relocations, suitable for one who appears to be 'a person searching for, and yet fearing, the end to a journey';[32] nor because she eventually has to abandon the adversity of Greece for Lon8don, 'her life [being] one of perpetual journey, of constant goodbyes and starting again. Even in Australia, where she was born and raised, she feels like an outsider',[33] an eternal nomad; but also because all her writing and lecturing activity has constituted a series of endoterritorial travel in itself. Firstly, it is all done in English, on English or Australian ground, and through English and Australian publishing houses, writers' circles, and organisations for the arts and humanities, and secondly, the narrative is Bouras's own motion in time, towards maturity and identity. In fact, Bouras the writer never really remains in Greece, for it seems that a woman can suffer in this foreign country for being 'clever', but can also use her cleverness to escape it, or at least to develop antibodies to it. For Braidotti, this capacity is, in fact, the essence of nomadism:

> Not all nomads are world travellers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat. It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of travelling.[34]

There is an extra edge, then, to Bouras's nomadism, for it is both actual and figurative, as well as a throwback to the *primus mobile* for nomadism, necessity (as opposed to philosophy). This theme of significant motion in its relation to gender and writing is most poignantly expressed in *Aphrodite and the Others* (1994), Bouras's third novel and winner of the New South Wales

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31 'Diversity in Health – Children's Book Awards', *Transcultural Mental Health Centre*, URL: http://www.tmhc.nsw.gov.au/misc/bookawards.htm (June 2003).

32 Reading Group Notes – *Starting Again*'.

33 'Title Details – *Starting Again*', *Penguin Books Australia*, URL: http://www.penguin.com.au/readers/groups/notes-title-details.cfm?SBN=0140281487 (June 2003).

34 Braidotti, p. 5.

State Literary Award, which is a kind of time-travel, the works and days of one person as well as a brief history of a foreign people. Using the same Trojan-horse stratagem as fellow Euro-*émigré*, American-born Gertrude Stein does in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Bouras offers on a primary level a biographical account of the life of her illiterate peasant mother-in-law, Aphrodite, while on a secondary level recounts the intellectual processing of her experience as an exasperated foreigner trying to come to terms with the unyielding alien-ness of her host environment, through her trusty gift of writing[35] – a gift she simultaneously craves as a way to re-capture her life and, affected by Aphrodite's dismissal of it, doubts (*AO* 131).

The fact that Gillian Bouras is never assimilated, or even comfortable, with the Greece she is living in is evident in her ceaseless return to this theme in *Aphrodite*, and the mutations of the Aphrodite characters in the 1996 semi-fictional *A Stranger Here*, where the mother-in-law is tellingly re-named Artemis, the implacable, loveless huntress, and Bouras herself, as Irene ['peace'], cannot find peace anywhere as, 'wherever she goes a part of her is pulling in the other direction, so that [...] no place is truly home'.[36] Either directly or indirectly, and even though her daughter-in-law seems to display no anger or prejudice whatsoever and appears conciliatory, good-natured, and patient with her, Aphrodite seems determined to offer as much trouble as her namesake goddess does for Medea – although some readers, versed in Greek culture, might interpret her attitude as teasing or 'tough love', Messinian-style. This animosity, however, often reaches absurd levels that remind one of the 'logic' of the characters populating Alice's Wonderland: as when Aphrodite, during her one memorable visit to Australia, feels justified in complaining about 'stupid Australian flies' who stay outside Gillian's house, while 'Greek flies have brains: they go inside. Always' (*AO* 130). Through such anecdotes we are led to understand that Aphrodite's negativity is not based on any personal defects, but on the fact that Gillian is a foreigner, something that turns her virtues into shortcomings and batters her self-confidence to the point of self-denial, or even repulsion, as in the following dream vision of a monster:

> It is large, dark and hairy, and walks on all fours. Its nether lip is truly horrible to look at: glistening, red and drooping. [...]
> 'What are you, anyway?' I say in what I hope are challenging tones. 'A bear? What?'

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35 This strategy of empowering familial biography was used by Bouras once before: but while her 1981 thesis on the life of her Australian grandfather won her a Master of Education in Victoria ('Papers of Gillian Bouras', p. 2), her biography of her Greek mother-in-law in *Aphrodite*, acclaimed abroad, counts for naught in her host Greek environment.

36 'Writers on the Road'.

> The thing looks at me, snorts threateningly and then growls, 'I'm a foreigner'. (*AO* 113)

What allows for this disfiguring animosity to be *expressed*, however, is not ethnicity or status, but rather structures of gender that, within the strongly patriarchal context of rural Greece, bind both women equally. Bouras makes it clear that many of the vicissitudes encountered by Aphrodite – and which may well be blamed for her hard-nosed attitude – derive from the 'woman's lot' that she has since birth been forced to bear. However, Bouras herself is forced into the same position when she leaves behind her endoterritorial culture where education, not gender, matter most. In the introductory juxtaposition of *Aphrodite*, the combatants are described as, respectively, 'Aphrodite/Yiayia: Greek. Traditional woman. Daughter [and wife] of a Greek Orthodox priest' – something which confers status; as mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, mother-in-law, blissfully illiterate, and, hence, all the more 'secure in her place and in her culture'; and 'Gillian/my self: Australian. Definitely Australian' (*AO* 1-2) – though this statement is immediately questioned – a migrant away from her roots, a grafted part of Yiayia's family, and 'literate, obviously, but ignorant of almost everything Yiayia thinks important. I am the daughter-in-law, the *nifi*, of Aphrodite' (*AO* 3). The latter definition, repeated three times along with the Greek term, like a ritual chant ending in oddness, tips the scale of self-questionings towards Aphrodite's essentialist point-of-view – a kind of reverse 'universalist' fallacy of a common female identity across nations and classes that contemporary postcolonial and poststructuralist feminists warn us about.[37] Although Bouras initially confronts her new environment with an eager sense of sisterhood, it is soon made clear that the Greek women reject her:

> Hers is the triumph: she is the great survivor. [...] And mine is the defeat, for, try as I might, and I did try, I could not be what she and others wanted, could not become what her world demanded as a right. The moral? In the end we can only be, any of us, what we are. (*AO* 2)

'Hers is the triumph' is again ritually repeated at the end of *Aphrodite*, when the dying mother-in-law, suffering from Alzheimer's, does not recognise Bouras, something which the writer interprets metaphorically: 'It's odd how truth emerges [...]: I always was a stranger [...] nothing ever altered that' (*AO* 165). This inability/refusal to acknowledge, to see the foreign woman as one like herself, this cultural illiteracy is the gist of the reversal of endoterritorial rules in this book: the 'Others' in the title refers not so much to the chorus of presences in Aphrodite's life, but mostly, one suspects, to Gillian, who travels to what is typically Other territory only to realise that she herself is

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[37] Braidotti, p. 36.

seen in this reductive manner – as women in patriarchal environments usually are. Thus the mother-in-law's illiteracy and senility become a metaphor for the oral, rural, traditional culture of Greece with its unspoken rules against foreign(ers/)women and its inability to learn and grow into a locus for literary and emotional creativity.

The oscillating motion of attempted identification with native womanhood and rejection which brings femininity into sharp focus structures the entire book and gives rise to its familiar tropes: personalised, sporadic 'notebook' entries – a genre viewed as 'feminine' since Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and also identified as such by Bouras in her next novel[38] – juxtaposed with Aphrodite's factual biography, microcosmic herstory with large-scale history, orality with literacy, Greece with Australia. Bouras records with sympathy Aphrodite's gender-based struggle in the patriarchal Greece of recent past: 'the sense of being totally dependent on a man, and on his good nature; the general sense of powerlessness' (*AO* 8), at a time when 'men only wanted women for the bedroom, the kitchen and the fields' (*AO* 58). However, Aphrodite has certain advantages over Gillian in that, in her own culture, she is honoured as a skilled housekeeper, a competent elderly matriarch who has borne only sons, a priest's daughter and widow, and an authority-figure over her daughters-in-law, who in the marital exchange are traditionally placed under a mother-in-law's scrutiny and orders. 'I have heard her hold forth on the subject of her other daughters-in-law', Bouras remarks: 'None of us is good enough: that is a fact of life we accept with varying grace' (*AO* 151). This hopeless servitude to a 'tyrannical' mother-in-law 'is frequently considered in women's writing about Greece',[39] since it has been a widespread traditional practice, forming a chain of oppression with each generation of in-law women, as Bouras herself concludes from the example of a neighbour, Kyria Ariadne, in whom she sees bit of herself given that her mother-in-law resented her too, especially because she had capitalised eagerly on the bit of education she had got (*AO* 60). Nevertheless, it is a problem of patriarchal marital structures, not just women; in being subjected to a system where the husband's biological mother supersedes the legal spouse, Bouras is thrown back into an exacerbated sense of an essentialised femininity.

Bouras's attempt to identify with the native element on her own terms fails spectacularly. Bouras observes that, in oral Greek culture, it is women who are the keepers of the *logos*, using on every occasion an infinite variety of memorised fragments: myths, legends, customs, traditions, spells, herbal

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[38] 'Reading Group Notes – *A Stranger Here'*, *Penguin Books Australia*, URL: http://www.penguin.com.au/readers/groups/notes/0140261141.txt (June 2003).

[39] 'Reading Group Notes – *Starting Again*'

recipes, tales of fairies and ghosts, the swirling mass that is part of religion' (*AO* 102). Aphrodite herself is a skilled storyteller and spinner of yarns. Yet if Bouras expects that this will create some sort of affinity with, or appreciation of, her own creative literacy, she is soon disappointed: to those Greek women, Bouras is like the people who accidentally sleep on threshing floors and, like the wayward little girls of fairy tales, fall prey to the fairies' spell and become 'deaf, mute and paralysed' (*AO* 101): incapacitated for practical women's work and useful only as a cautionary oral tale. To the oral culture, expression is for immediate consumption and outwardly-directed, to the 'Others'; for Bouras, however, literacy is the path to introspection, to making sense of one's life: a kind of endoterritorialism of the mind which, for the villagers, would be perceived as a kind of social autism, a fairy curse. To the markedly different oral mindset of rural Greece, where one feels at the centre of the world in one's limited habitat and 'The less you know, the more secure you feel', a literate person's ability to know information beyond what is immediately recalled or necessary for survival is often incomprehensible, or even undesirable (*AO* 94-95); hence Bouras's literacy actually hampers her communication. Coupled with her ignorance of survival skills – 'This second woman cannot spin, weave, knit or crochet [...] she cannot make knots or put a pannier on the donkey' (*AO* 13) – Bouras's cultural reduction from Western professional intellectual to a useless, speechless dependent, a fosterling on her husband's family, in short, a patriarchal caricature of femininity, is complete. It does not matter that Aphrodite herself, as well as the other strong and domineering Greek women disprove this notion daily; as all systems, patriarchy contains its own contradictions, and it is ultimately the iconic concept of womanhood that prevails over reality. As Bouras puts it, reality is a matter of perception, and it works differently for literate and oral societies: 'She and I inhabit different countries with different social codes, and I am not, at this point, speaking of geography' (*AO* 31). The woman can move in space, and be subjected to change; the author cannot survive, or even make, the transition.

The mechanics of this interaction of illiterate culture, travel and gender are also given through the 'alienation effect' of a reverse situation, namely Aphrodite's brief visit to Australia prior to the Bourases moving to Greece. It is Bouras's belief that the great majority of immigrant or travelling Greeks maintained a sense of belonging first and foremost to Greece, their true home, to which they planned to return.[40] This overwhelming sense of cultural

[40] Gillian Bouras, 'Wasting the Labours of Loneliness', *Australian Archaeologies: Cultural Landscapes in the Unique Continent*, Biennial Conference of the British Australian Studies Association, Univ. of Wales, Lampeter (4/9/998), http://www.lamp.ac.uk/basa/bouras.html (June 2003).

magnetism is coupled, in Aphrodite's case, with a spectacular incapacity to understand what 'a different country' means: she cannot understand how Australians don't speak Greek, or whether she moved geographically during the plane flight, or whether television shows are real (*AO* 127-128). The result is that, even in the antipodes, Aphrodite thinks herself at home and remains endoterritorially secure emotionally. Meanwhile, she is also physically maintained so, like a nineteenth-century Western traveller, by the Australian network of Greek immigrants who treat her as 'the fêted guest', gather around to hear her stories and news, and surround her with a security blanket of warm reminiscences and familiar talk, honouring her status in exactly the same terms as in Greece (*AO* 135). A prime factor in that sense of security is the presence of her son, George, Gillian's husband, who acts as the colonial official/protector would, allowing his mother to do anything she pleases, even if she breaks the cultural rules of the land she travels to and 'penetrates' it with her inquiring gaze: 'Yiayia picks over my bags and bundles and wanders into rooms without knocking, as she used to do when she was in Australia: there she made an uninvited inventory of my meagre supply of jewellery while George glared at me and defied me to say a word. I let my indignant gaze drop and meekly said nothing' (*AO* 140). Here the endoterritorial context is shown to work in clearly patriarchal terms: the authority figure is male, while Gillian forfeits the 'masculine' gaze and capacity for reaction to assume the mute and meek attitude of the obedient wife and daughter-in-law. Moreover, she is measured here in terms of her capacity, as wife-trophy to a man, to draw gifts of jewellery from him or to have them bestowed on her as dowry: since her supply is found to be meagre, this is an admission of failure, of weakness, and of all those feelings of devaluation that surround the concept of femininity in the rural Greece of the book. So even though it is Aphrodite who has moved in space, it is Gillian who has truly travelled, for she has submitted to another country's system of power and gender relations. The older woman remains, like her brainy flies, 'inside. Always'.

Nevertheless, the readers are allowed a pale shadow of the feminising feelings of helplessness that accompany a strange travelling experience when Bouras offers an emotional profile of Aphrodite in those few instances of her journey when she is faced with Australia itself, and not the Greek immigrant community there; in facing the possibility, during her visit, of having 'to manage alone with *her* [Gillian] all day', Aphrodite lets herself, for one single instance in her life as witnessed by the author, 'show the slightest failure of confidence'(*AO* 129). She is also shown retreating to silence when faced with conundrums (*AO* 133), while later she is 'horrified at the sight of toddlers being thrown into a swimming-pool' for drown-proofing lessons,

thinking that they will die (*AO* 135). These moments of strain, even though carefully concealed, for 'the constant presentation of confidence, real or assumed, is a vital part of identity for a person living in an oral culture' (*AO* 129), testify to the potential of an unknown environment to cause feelings in the travelling subject that are here identified as not only alienating, but stereotypically feminising such as fear, self-doubt, silence.

If such a strain can be visited upon the resisting/ignorant Aphrodite, it must be concluded that for Bouras, whose literacy has taught her to empathise openly, the effect must be multiplied. Unlike Aphrodite, she does not see herself as continuous with her tradition: she disavows having inherited the masculine courage of Ned Kelly or Breaker Morant facing execution (though some, speaking from experience, might say it takes more courage to face a Messinian village gossip circle) (*AO* 114-115), and instead tries to adapt herself to an oral society, where 'you are what people say' (*AO* 69). What people say there, of course, is that a daughter is 'bitterness', 'sorrow', and 'troubles' for providing a dowry to marry her off, or that 'the state of her house reflects a woman's moral character' (*AO* 106), while 'Village women, and not only village women, like to feel that powerful men are looking after them' (*AO* 107). The parenthetic admission in this last statement returns us to the fear of 'contamination' by effeminate oriental ethics: women travellers are more susceptible to those feminising effects that may sidetrack them from ever completing their journey, for they carry those tendencies, patriarchal lore tells us, within them already. The conflict within Bouras, what she, as a thinking, rounded person, knows to be her potential and what feminine weaknesses her foster culture heaps upon her is poignantly expressed in a little religious fable, probably narrated to her by one of the village women, about how a place got the name 'the Orchard of the Panagia' [Virgin Mary] when the Panagia finds refuge from a storm there when she was travelling around Mt. Athos. Although to the Greeks it is the ritual-strengthening value of the tale that matters, what Bouras asks only is 'Why was she travelling?' (*AO* 113). The question could be taken in two ways: on the one hand, it might be a whole-heartedly Medean endorsement of women staying at home and not traipsing about, for they might encounter troubles, like a storm, a cheating husband, or a curmudgeon of a mother-in-law. This would identify Bouras with the gender mentalities of her host environment. On the other hand, the fact that this is an odd question, the kind she has been warned about by Aphrodite not to ask, and that the potential answer might provide a good – and religiously-sanctioned – reason for women to travel suggests that Bouras is already, while writing *Aphrodite*, formulating the idea that exceptional women not only travel, but they keep on

travelling precisely when in gender trouble, a consciously feminist, postmodern nomadic fate which Bouras chooses for herself as well.

In the face of such a psychological and cultural disintegration, complete with nightmares, like Medea, Bouras chooses to construct a kind of substitute for endoterritorial security, which can neither be a return to home culture nor an enforced colonialist triumph over the host environment – only a conscious assumption of the never-ending journey that turns the 'migrant' into an 'expat'. She achieves this by subjecting Aphrodite to an experience as alienating as orality has been for herself: a transliteration of Aphrodite's world into a written text, subject to history – whose larger presence has never been understood by the elderly woman. Indeed, even though Bouras appears to discredit the notion initially, quoting Marx's saying that history 'does nothing, it possesses no immense wealth, fights no battles. It is rather man, real living man, who does everything, who possesses and fights' (*AO* 43), she insists throughout the book in placing meticulously Aphrodite's life-incidents next to larger historical events (the deaths and loss to immigration of siblings in the Bouras household are juxtaposed to the 1922 Smyrna catastrophe in Asia Minor). In this way, she reverses the oral mindset that considers the personal perspective paramount, by turning Aphrodite into another symptom of her time and place, annexing the individual into larger (recorded) history and culture, which serves as a kind of scholarly endo-territory. Furthermore, in what seem to be neutral statements about Greek history, she discredits oral imagination in favour of details written down in history books, since 'the imagination only accepts them because they are documented fact', as opposed to the world of folklore which is Aphrodite's stock and trade: 'The pictures are there, the words are there: this is not hearsay, exaggerated oral history, folk memory' (*AO* 84). Accordingly, at the start of her mother-in-law's biography, Bouras gives an overview of a gallery of family pictures of Aphrodite, starting from her latest shots, where for the 'truly old' Aphrodite the 'days of combat are over (*AO* 20-21); proceeding to the shots of Aphrodite as Gillian knew her' in belligerent pose: headscarf left untied, [...] fists bunched on knees, legs set apart, skirt pulled wide, shoulders set, lips compressed, eyes challenging the camera'– and ending with a picture of Aphrodite as a small girl, a little 'Bourbouni' [beetle], innocent and pretty (*AO* 21, 22). It is a regression meant to pin Aphrodite's human dimensions down in some kind of manageable, measurable manner that makes sense, but also to exorcise the fear the matriarch induces by seeing her as a baby-bug – a feat possible only in the realm of textuality, where history can be miniaturised in retrospect. This 'historisation', popular with other women travel writers in Greece, also serves, according to McClintock, as a shift into a masculinised, culturally-empowered stance, since women were traditionally

figured in the West 'as inherently atavistic – the conservative repository of the national archaic. Women were not seen as inhabiting history proper but existing, like colonised peoples, in a permanently anterior time within the modern nation'.[41] Thus Bouras uses some of the clichés of her own culture to distance herself from the feminising context of the Greek village.

This motion away from feminising Otherness and into known cultural tropes is recorded step-by-step next to Aphrodite's life-journey backwards in time, and thus constitutes another journey, Bouras's own, towards self-rediscovery and a release from stressful backwardness. It starts with the accidental diagnosis of her regressed condition in comparison to what she would have become had she remained in a Western environment – the equivalent of the time lag attributed to women and the colonised nations that McClintock speaks of above. When in 1992 Bouras visits the National Library of Scotland, she is absolutely baffled by modern search-engine and cataloguing technology and discovers that she, too, is now culturally handicapped:

> Green letters and figures leapt onto the screen and conveyed virtually nothing. Another press of the button elicited the suggestion that I enter the command HELP. Command? A cry in the jungle night seemed more like it. [...]. A stern twenty-year-old female came to my aid and was totally unmoved, as well she might be, by my blitherings about living in a Greek village. [...]. The book I wanted and eventually procured was W. J. Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. […] For months I had been using my own tools to shape a world I now know I can never live in, had been trying to make sense of the years spent feeling isolated because I have *ta grammata*, and because *ta grammata* I have are not the right ones. There I was, struggling to write a biography of an illiterate person and becoming daily more aware of the contradictions involved in the task. In the library a salutary lesson was taught me, for I too, am an illiterate in the world where computer literacy is spreading its tentacles, just as much a dinosaur a Yiayia is in the world of the book. (*AO* 9-10)

A careful look at the wording of this account shows that Bouras has become like Aphrodite in more ways than the one identified: her self-perception as a cornered jungle animal (a *topos* for sexist thinking, in which woman is natural, man is civic), her humiliating confrontation with a younger, more capable woman – designated by the essentialist word 'female' – the ensuing hysteria at the realisation of self-delusion, her inability to produce *logos* (due to 'blitherings' as well as claims that are taken as preposterous excuses) and the view of *ta grammata*, ['the letters', or literacy] as a kind of disease one 'has', reveal a mindset that has been so battered by the alienating experience of travel, she is now self-identified as a typically feminine subject out of

[41] McClintock, p. 359.

some misogynistic fantasy: helpless, confused, silenced, emotional, animalistic, a temporal throwback.

Thus, though Bouras humbly claims about Aphrodite that 'her oral world has made me more aware of both the privilege and the poverty there is in being literate' (*AO* 7), and while indeed the author has learned to create a beautiful hybrid kind of writing, mixing multilingual lore and fact, separating critique away from rancour, in the end she turns towards a different mentor, Walter J. Ong, who has done what she herself aims to do: textualised orality, which for Bouras is the bridging of an impassable divide. By writing Aphrodite's biography, Bouras offers more than 'a labour of love', however questionable (*AO* 7): she transliterates the puzzling Aphrodite into the Australian writer's own endoterritorial context, into a textual persona she can control through superior literary know-how. In the patriarchal chain of command, Bouras cannot question her mother-in-law; but as an author, she is justified and even expected to dissect her subject to the greatest extent possible. As Mario Vargas Llosa has remarked about fiction based on autobiographical experiences, 'Creativity is often little more than a form of retaliation against a life we find hard to live: we perfect it, or debase it in accordance with our own cravings and feelings of bitterness; we rework the original experience, modify what actually happened in order to satisfy the demands of our frustrated desires, our broken dreams, our feelings of joy or anger'.[42] In that sense Bouras operates in the same context as those Western women authors about the Orient who, as Chaudhuri and Strobel have shown, participated – often unwittingly – in imperial politics simply by using a language whose heuristic context and semantics were already loaded in favour of the West.[43] Bouras cannot avoid the poetically-licensed attribution to Aphrodite of deeper emotions, hesitations and a general mellowing-out of her personality, for that is the convention of the biographical genre: to see the human behind the image. She even reaches the point, towards the end of the book, of identifying Aphrodite with herself, the former weaving on her loom an endless 'dream-tapestry' of her life, the latter the never-ending story of her travel (*AO* 168-69). One wonders, however, how much of that Aphrodite is real, or wishful thinking on the author's part, who admits: 'I have undoubtedly brought my own prejudices and perceptions to bear on the story of my mother-in-law's life. I am too introspective, too analytical, too Western, too middle class to have written about a woman who had no choices in life, who simply had to take what it handed her' (*AO* 7). One equally cannot help noticing that this is also a gendered gesture away from an

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42 Mario Vargas Llosa, 'Lies That Tell the Truth', in *Three Plays*, trans. by David Graham-Young (New York: The Noonday Press/Hill and Wang, 1990), pp. 5-7 (p. 6).

43 Chaudhuri and Strobel, p. 7.

imposed femininity Bouras herself has been subject to while in Greece; as Braidotti puts it, '"Woman" is that which is assigned and has no power of self-definition'.[44]

In writing the book Bouras offers Aphrodite a gift, which her mother in law cannot reject like she does others, for she cannot evaluate it practically. Most importantly, though, such a book, even if it appears as a submissive feminine gesture of propitiation, cannot be derived from the elderly woman's skills, for in the patriarchal society of rural Greece, history has been a masculine prerogative:

> [...] whatever village women knew, they knew only after it had been filtered through men's relaying of information and expression of opinion. Men were the fibres that bound the two worlds together. (*AO* 38)

The point here is that Bouras, like a privileged Western 'sister', offers to champion the cause of their enlightenment, regardless of whether those women would have wanted or needed her to do so. 'When an oral person becomes literate', she admits, 'he sacrifices a great deal, including a certain connection with the natural world. That sacrifice is a kind of death, as literacy is a new kind of life' (*AO* 10). The life she offers Aphrodite, then, transforms Aphrodite into an Other than her former self. In a parody of the Lacanian 'mirror' of normativisation which Aphrodite's society holds up to Bouras, the author holds up her own textual mirror to this imago and creates, if not a reversal and a liberation from the effect (something which would be impossible), the endless reflections that question the pragmatic outlook of rural Greek society and offer a possibility of Medean escape in her final, fictional confrontation with Aphrodite:

> The younger woman smiles back. Their eyes lock. [...] But then something peculiar happens to the older woman: a shift in perception, a dislocation, a grinding of dimensions; she could not possibly describe it. She does not have the words for such a task.
>
> But what happens is this: she looks into those brown eyes. The brown eyes, for the first time, are a mirror: the older woman sees herself clearly in them, clearly and easily and it is a deeply strange thing, but in that moment [...] she knows that her carpet, her tapestry [...] has been woven. [...] Not by her expert hand, but one cannot have everything. The small hand is still moving gently on her wrist. She touches it, but still looks deep into the mirror. And now, at last, she can let the rope snap, let the final string go. (*AO* 172)

With this neat ending, Bouras manages to extricate herself from the context of stressful feminisation to which her travel has subjected her: she leads the older woman, who haunts her as part of herself, to abandon her weaving for the liberating privilege of the masculine gaze. The fact that Bouras can be at

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[44] Braidotti, p. 83.

home only in the shifting directions of her text – for geographical pragmatic reality seem to be Aphrodite's and patriarchy's arena of supremacy – ensures, furthermore, the *ad infinitum* continuation of her travelling, for one can eternally return to the Derridean primary written sign for re-interpretations which will outlast its author's peregrinations, or oral memory: 'We constantly reinvent ourselves as we repeat the patterns of the past in the present and future. The story is always starting again'.[45] Textuality transforms in this manner the shortcomings of Bouras's emotional reality during her journey, her 'feeling a dislocation in time and space' (*AO* 134) into the virtue of multiple interpretations that abide: 'Stories, whether sung, told or written, are an enchantment that enables sorrow and suffering to be borne', she states (*AO* 10), admitting the shift into fiction as a witch-like spell against travel-induced, gender-based hardships, but even against (the deeper fiction of) an original self, from which Gillian Bouras escaped via Greek marriage and travel. Where there's a text, there is a Yellow Brick way.

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Helga Ramsey-Kurz

Going Back to the Mother: Postcolonial Inscriptions and Migrant Tales

Abstract

In her autobiographical novel *Aphrodite and the Others*, Australian writer Gillian Bouras chronicles the return of a well educated female from the modern New World to what are both her cultural roots and her late husband's first home. There she is confronted with her mother-in-law, whose antics she at first attributes to the older woman's educational inferiority. Yet in her ensuing reflections on Aphrodite's illiteracy she gradually discovers an otherness rich with cultural and historical wisdom, access to which, the narrator realises, would be denied to her in her home-country Australia.

As the wife of a Greek immigrant to Australia, Gillian Bouras entertains a highly ambivalent relationship to Greece, which she explores in her novels *A Foreign Wife* (1986), *A Fair Exchange* (1991), *Aphrodite and the Others* (1994), *A Stranger Here* (1996), *Starting Again* (1999), and *Saving Christmas* (2000).[1] In these texts she recounts her own extended sojourns in her husband's homeland from the point of view of someone who is foreigner and family, outsider and insider, tourist and resident, novice and expert, student and teacher at once. The multiple contradictions implicit in Bouras's attitude to Greece become particularly obvious in *Aphrodite and the Others*, in which the author addresses the sharp contrast between her life in Melbourne and the life she leads in a small Peloponnesian village a forty minutes' drive from Kalamata or 'four of five hours by donkey or boat'.[2] In the process, the author's account of her passage from urban Australia to rural Greece comes to represent an 'immigrant experience in reverse'.[3] On the one hand, the narrative may be read as a re-enactment of her husband's journey from Greece to Australia (albeit in the opposite direction); on the other, it can be understood as an ironic reconstruction of the tried narrative formula

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1 Sections of this paper have been published in Helga Ramsey-Kurz, *The Non-Literate Other: Readings of Illiteracy in Twentieth-Century Novels in English*, Costerus Series 171 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 139-62.

2 Gillian Bouras, *Aphrodite and the Others* (1994; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), p. 72. References to this edition will henceforth be given in brackets after the respective quotations.

3 Frances Dixon, 'Immigrant Experience in Australian Literature', in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* by William H. Wilde, Joy Hooton and Barry Andrews, 2nd edition (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 393-99 (p. 397).

according to which a traveller sets out from a 'centre' of civilisation on an expedition into unknown land seemingly devoid of any human culture.

Bouras applies this narrative formula in a rather unconventional manner in *Aphrodite and the Others* in that she has the described journey lead not from a western metropolis into some mysterious wilderness *outside* Europe, but in the opposite direction: from an urban centre in the New World to a wild zone in Southern Europe. Thus she effectively undermines the received opposition between the Old World as thoroughly charted and tamed territory and the New World as a domain containing vast uncivilised spaces. Acutely aware of the standard perception of Australian nature as hostile and barren, Bouras translates exactly this perception into evocations of an equally barren and hostile European land. It is more than a mere biographical coincidence that, in so doing, she does not select randomly any place in the Old World, but a region commonly perceived as the cradle of western civilisation and famed for its wealth of monuments documenting the birth of this civilisation. Yet the Peloponnesian landscape in which she sets her novel remains starkly devoid of such monuments. Bouras sketches Greek countryside as a habitat only of the most resilient plants and animals. In sparsely populated hamlets 'dogs bark, roosters crow, donkeys sob, small creatures (stoats, tortoises?) scuffle in the undergrowth' (*AO* 17). Civilisation appears transient in the rural Greece of her narrative, where any more vulnerable form of existence or any attempt, however modest, at subjecting the land to cultivation seems doomed to decay:

> In summer one can walk endlessly on ochre-coloured earth, gather oregano and wildflowers, see nobody and hear nothing except the relentless shrilling of cicadas. A distant haze smudges blue mountains; here and there cypress trees stand like dark-green sentinels. The hedgerows grow high and thick, and the years have produced a tumble and twining of prickly pear, ivy, mastic and blackberry. Piles of wood, safe in the forks of trees, wait to be collected before the first rains come; sheep and donkey dung has been swept into small cones. The only sign of change is the occasional glimpse of a crumbling mud-brick house standing deserted amid the straggling remains of an orchard, a salutary reminder of the inevitability of decay. (*AO* 17-18)

There is nothing to dispel the impression that the setting of the novel is a most unlikely birthplace of an enduring, let alone thriving civilisation. Bouras even abstains from clarifying whether it is the bleakness of the land that has prevented its inhabitants from trying to attain some degree of refinement or whether it is the barrenness of their minds that has kept them from cultivating their surroundings. The perfect correspondence between the simplicity of the people's lives and the plainness of their environment remains profoundly enigmatic to the outsider.

One such outsider is Bouras's protagonist narrator, a teacher from Melbourne who has always been at home in a culture of transformation, metamorphosis and progress. She finds the slowness of change in her mother-in-law's village almost impossible to tolerate and repeatedly tries to escape from the bareness of her new life into nostalgic recollections of her homeland. She recounts the cultural revival Australia underwent under the auspices of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam after the end of the Vietnam War. With fondness she remembers the 'particular lightness' and signs of change in the air, and speculates how much promise they held especially 'for women, in the arts' (*AO* 134). The ironic inversion of the popular representation of Australia as lacking in cultural sophistication is quite obvious here. As part of the same ploy, Bouras has her narrator recall, not without pride, how her Greek *pethera*, her mother-in-law, came to Australia for the first time to be overawed by her middle-class suburban home, what with all '[t]he space, the carpeted floors, the bathroom, the kitchen and its appliances, the large gardens front and back [...]' and, of course, television (*AO* 130-131). As a special personal triumph she cherishes the memory of taking Aphrodite – Yiayia – to see Como, 'most graceful of Victoria's colonial mansions' and witnessing one of her mother-in-law's rare displays of amazement at this manifestation of 'extreme wealth, [...] great beauty, and [...] domestic yet grand, opulent, unattainable, splendour' (*AO* 136). 'It was a village woman's glimpse of heaven', Gillian is still convinced almost two decades later (*AO* 136).

Greece, Gillian feels, is a far cry from the exciting cultural climate to which she used to belong. To her, cultural advancement appears to be suspended altogether, to have been undone or even reversed in the world to which she finds herself transported. Gillian is filled by a sense of having travelled backward rather than moved forward, of having returned to an earlier mode of existence rather than progressed to a new level of experience. Bouras's descriptions of Greece seem to recall the sense of other-timeliness typically evoked, according to Joep Leersen, in nineteenth-century adventure romances which take the reader into the unexplored periphery of Empire [...] 'out of bourne of time and space'.[4] As will be shown later, if they do so, it is not without irony. Accordingly, Gillian marvels at the monotony of the existence she has come to share. 'The routine of Yiayia's life does not alter', she reflects. 'Once a year she makes soap. She crochets, gossips on the front step, naps, wakes, eats, visits the family, says her prayers and goes to bed.

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[4] Joep Leersen, 'The Allochronic Periphery: Towards a Grammar of Cross-Cultural Representation', in *Beyond Pug's Tour: National and Ethnic Stereotyping in Theory and Literary Practice*, ed. by C.C. Barfoot, DQR Studies in Literature 20 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 285-294 (p. 292).

She coughs once, twice, three times before falling asleep' (*AO* 35). Not actively trying to appropriate what she identifies as an 'innate resistance to change' (*AO* 45), Gillian is nonetheless transformed by it. When one moves from Australia to rural Greece, 'all confidence eventually evaporates', Gillian writes in her notebook, 'and many aspects of the personality become atrophied. Sense of self is drastically impaired; in extreme cases even sanity is threatened' (*AO* 113). Occasionally, the sense that in coming to Greece she has allowed herself to regress to a more 'primitive' mode of existence, to a lower level of being gives Gillian nightmares. In them she experiences herself as a large, dark and hairy monster walking on all fours and with a drooping nether lip truly horrible to look at (*AO* 113). Her feeling that her self has been distorted and deformed beyond recognition is reinforced when her eldest son tells her that she is not Australian anymore. This, she herself believes, is the doubtful reward for assimilating all too keenly the *persona* of 'the daughter-in-law, the *nifi*, of Aphrodite' (*AO* 3). In adopting this role even despite her mother-in-law's fierce refusal to 'adopt' *her*, Gillian becomes liable to both betraying her own 'motherland' and trespassing hostile (or 'step-motherly') territory. Exile to total stasis seems an adequate punishment to the guilt-ridden mind asserting itself in Gillian's sleep.

'If "roots" are a conservative myth, then all homesickness is fiction', Rosemary Marangoly George reasons in *The Politics of Home*.[5] In the detached and unsentimental manner George deems characteristic of writers of immigrant literature, Bouras recounts her narrator's sense of homelessness in a place where nobody speaks her mother tongue and, worse even, nobody has a need for writing, least of all for the kind of writing in which she engages as a chronicler of Aphrodite's story. The redundancy of *ta grammata*, the letters she uses to translate people's lives into stories, dawns on Gillian, as, in the process of capturing 'a taste of the flavour' of Aphrodite's life, she tries to imagine how her illiterate mother-in-law might possibly see her. With fascination she discovers that Aphrodite has always resented her reading and writing, 'for they are not *work*' (*AO* 31), that her mother-in-law secretly chuckles about her, and regards her writerly ambitions as evidence of 'a hitherto unknown moral failing in [her] character' (*AO* 147), as proof of her slothfulness. '[S]he is, I think, fairly convinced that I am mad: eccentric at best, insane at worst' (*AO* 7), Gillian considers and speculates that Aphrodite must think of her mainly as a woman who

[5] Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (1996; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 199.

> does not talk, or talks only in a certain manner [...] but makes noises which make no sense. She cannot speak very well [...]; she does not have the gift, is not talented in that way. She knows no riddles or rhymes, is ignorant of proverbs and spells, cannot make jokes.
> [...] Even after she learns to talk, this second woman is often silent, watching and gazing, looking at who can guess what. And at times like these, she does not seem to listen to anything or anybody, but makes squiggles and lines, notes in a little book. (*AO* 12-13)

Still, what remains her worst deficiency in the eyes of her mother-in-law, Gillian believes, is her inability to spin, weave, knit or crochet, make knots or put a pannier on the donkey. Aphrodite, Gillian is certain, regards her as profoundly ignorant. 'She knows nothing', she imagines her mother-in-law thinking to herself. 'She does not understand how important rope is. She has not the least idea of the basic importance of knots' (*AO* 13). As if in an attempt to contradict the older woman's unspoken criticism, Gillian asserts her narratorial voice to exhibit her own awareness of the fact that, in Greece (or rather, in *Aphrodite's* Greece and the only Greece on which Gillian claims any authority), 'much can depend on the strength of a tether and on the ability to tie knots that do not slip' (*AO* 13). Yet not even the possession of such 'insider' knowledge can secure her an insider status in the village community. Knowing how to weave the 'thread of time, the weight of history' (*AO* 13) into a fabric of written words, she realises, is not the same as knowing how to tie 'real' knots. After all, when she tethers the donkey, he still pulls free because she has tied the rope the wrong way.

Gillian's cultural and linguistic isolation and the resultant sense of being stranded in a place far too alien for her to ever become truly part of it, seem strangely reminiscent of how the Greek Australian writer Vasso Kalamaras records her experience of the Australian outback.[6] At the same time, her situation recalls the predicament of other traveller figures in English literature braving worlds which have never before been comprehended in any form of writing and reaching the limits of their expressive scope as they engage in a discourse with the unlettered inhabitants of these worlds. It is these (mostly male) travellers' heroic resistance to what they perceive as barbarism that Gillian seems to share as she begins to record her encounters with the inhabitants of the Greek village in which she has come to stay. Yet what remains a linguistic assertion of control and thus an overtly colonising exercise in the case of her male literary precursors turns out to be something quite different in the case of Bouras's sojourner in Greece. From the beginning Gillian seems sensitive to the problem of discursive domination and for this reason unsure of the legitimacy of her attempt to capture the lives of Aphrodite and her contemporaries in writing. Only gradually does she

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[6] Kalamaras does so, for instance, in the short stories collected in *Other Earth* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1977) and *Bitterness* (Perth: Western Australia Artlook, 1983).

reconcile herself to the fact that there is little else she has to offer to the community into which she has been accepted, even if only as an outsider. As she professes, it is for the sake of this community, whose future seems as uncertain to her as the survival of its memory, that she wants to reconstruct her *pethera's* story and save it from the imminent threat of oblivion. 'I wanted to make a gesture', Aphrodite's self-appointed biographer explains, convincingly humbled by the indifference her Greek relatives seem to display not only to her own presence but also to her mother-in-law's past, 'to catch [...] the life which is flowing away from us every minute' (*AO* 7). 'This has been, in a sense, a labour of love' (*AO* 7).

Writing as an act of devotion, however, presupposes the writer's transcendence of the familiar practice of reducing the native Other to a Caliban figure, an 'orphaned bastard' as Roslyn Jolly puts it, 'with close links to the animal world, [...] shocking, primitive and abominable alter ego'.[7] In *Aphrodite and the Others*, this is accomplished only very gradually in a slow process of the narrator's emancipation from the fantasy of her own cultural superiority. Central to this process is Gillian's struggle to come to terms with Aphrodite's most alienating and, at the same time, most fascinating feature: her illiteracy. It is not only because no one else has ever attempted to record her mother-in-law's story, or because Aphrodite herself never will, that Gillian embarks on the project herself. At first, her determination seems also nourished by the ambition to capture something profoundly exotic. 'It is Yiayia's voice in particular that I try to write down' (*AO* 4), she announces not without a certain ethnographic zeal and poses the rhetorical question, '[F]or are not voices as individual as fingerprints?' (*AO* 3-4) Illiterate or 'oral' people, she persuades herself and the reader, depend on others to tell them who they are. 'Oral people are not, usually, self-analytical', she expounds. 'They cannot see themselves, obviously, as a 'layer cake of texts'. Their sense of self most often comes through the evaluation of outsiders. They are what other people say' (*AO* 6). To enforce her diagnosis of Aphrodite's incapacity to explain – or even *be* – herself, Gillian refers to the cases of 'Panayota, Evgenia, and all the other faceless, nameless Peloponnesian women' (*AO* 8) whose families did not consider them worth sending to school as girls and of whom Gillian, therefore, doubts that they can at all understand the connection 'between the vast outside world and their own tiny, inward-looking one' (*AO* 37-38). 'And did these women realise', she demands, 'that they were never able to confront information from the outside world directly, that they could not know it in the way they knew facts

[7] Roslyn Jolly, 'Transformations of Caliban and Ariel: Imagination and Language in David Malouf, Margaret Atwood and Seamus Heaney', *World Literature Written in English*, 26 (1986), 295-330 (p. 297).

in their own world?' (*AO* 38) Convinced that whatever Greek village women know has been filtered through men's relaying of information and expression of opinions, Gillian cannot imagine the females of Aphrodite's generation to have any idea 'of history, of the years of schism, national defeat, and seesawing between monarchy and republic' (*AO* 37).

Implicitly feminist in the identification of patriarchal forces at work in traditional Greek families and responsible for the trapping of female intelligence, Gillian's assumption of the historical ineffectuality of Greek women is nonetheless distorted by ethnocentric prejudices. Only eventually does Gillian learn how deeply implicated and how actively involved women like Aphrodite really were in the shaping of their country's past. Without the women, her son's history textbook informs her, there would have been no victory over the invading Italians in 1940. During Greece's resistance against the Germans, she discovers, the grandmothers used to mind the children while their mothers made bread for the army or carried ammunition where transports could not go. The women of Kalamata clapped and cheered at the prisoners who were marched through the streets by the Germans and threw them bits of food while the men carefully resisted such demonstrative gestures of defiance. During the winter of 1941-1942, when three hundred thousand people in Athens died of starvation because the occupying forces were sending most produce to Italy and Germany, girls in Yiayia's village kept resistance fighters supplied with food. The women of a neighbouring village who were found out to be doing the same narrowly escaped their death sentence only to spend fourteen nights digging graves for their brutally murdered husbands and sons with whatever tools they could find (*AO* 86). And as for Aphrodite, Gillian finds out that in 1944 she took the calculated risk of hiding subversive literature in her own house to protect her neighbour's son from execution after the Second Round in the communist attempt to win supremacy in Greece (*AO* 88). Listening to Yiayia replay the past and processing it, Gillian begins to realise that Greek women would, of course, have known 'the names of ELAS,[8] EDES,[9] General Markos, Zervas, Papandreou, Stalin, and Churchill' (*AO* 89), but also that their knowing was far less important than their actions, even if these have remained largely unknown to the world.

Unlike other travellers in English literature, Gillian, then, undergoes a process of realisation in which her perception of the Other as culturally inferior changes quite dramatically. In translating the story of her non-literate mother-in–law into written text, Gillian begins to question her own acculturation and finally arrives at a completely new appreciation of the

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8 The military arm of EAM, the National Liberation Front founded in 1941.

9 The National Republican Greek League, founded in 1942 and led by General Zervas.

Other's mode of perception and reflection. Bouras makes this particularly clear by implicitly contrasting the written portrait of Aphrodite with the photographs Gillian has collected of her mother-in-law. In the twelve years she has been living in Greece and which are in part documented in these photographs, Gillian never reaches the understanding she attains as she is working on her *pethera's* biography. As a first sign of the change in their relationship, Gillian assumes a new attitude in her description of Aphrodite's lack of education. With a shift from fascination and pity to affectionate amusement Gillian starts to undermine the ambitious socio-historical cum anthropological analysis she has been offering of the 'case' of her illiterate mother-in-law. As Gillian's conscientiously researched 'case-study' changes into an increasingly personal story, quotations from scholarly literature (including *ABC: The Alphabetisation of the Popular Mind* by Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders and *Orality and Literacy* by Walter Ong) begin to be replaced by passages in which the author seeks to formulate her own interpretation of Aphrodite's otherness. Eventually, the younger woman comes to value Aphrodite's 'reading' of the world, so different from her own, as an inexhaustible source of quaint anecdotes. Thus she shifts to recording her alarm when she finds that Aphrodite is trying to cure her sick donkey with Coca Cola. She offers a description of how, during one of their rare conversations about politics, Yiayia suddenly produces a roll of paper, which turns out to be a large photograph of Karamanlis, and passionately proclaims, 'He's the one for me [...]. He's very, very good' (*AO* 107). She observes how Aphrodite refers to people from a village two kilometres away as 'foreigners' and is puzzled when she grinningly replies to her question what this makes of her, Gillian, 'That's different. You're ours' (*AO* 112). She recalls her mother-in-law being introduced to a sixty-year-old monoglot Australian and, unwilling to accept that he cannot understand Greek keeps roaring her questions at him in stubborn expectation of an answer. And she imagines Aphrodite travelling by plane for the first time in her life and after hours in the air still wondering why 'the capsule of steel which will somehow get her to the other end of the world in an amazingly short time' (*AO* 127) was not taking off; as family lore has it, she simply did not realise that the view from her window had not been changing because all she could see was the plane's wing.

In trying to envisage Aphrodite as a traveller and to understand the bewilderment her mother-in-law must have felt when she set out on the longest journey of her life, Gillian begins to see that she and Aphrodite might have something in common after all. Even if they still make fun of Aphrodite's ignorance, the stories Gillian recounts do no longer lack a certain sympathetic understanding and occasionally even suggest the daughter-in-

law's momentary identification with the older woman. In the course of Bouras's novel, Aphrodite appears less and less an object of ridicule, spectacularisation or exoticisation, until ultimately, the traveller whose secret gaze has been following the apparently uncultured native ceases to feel any need for reconciliation with her own civilisation. Instead of deriving a sense of justification for her own culture from documenting the spectacle of the 'primitive', 'savage', or 'barbarous', because uneducated, Other, Gillian is led to wonder whether writing is not so much a constructively communicative and, hence, socially relevant gesture, as a profoundly antisocial exercise that only isolates the writer further and further from the subjects he/she tries to understand by writing about them.

With her explicit questioning of the cultural value and validity of writing, Bouras transcends the 'ethnocentric narcissism' which, according to Paul Lyons, informs traditional colonialist representations of the 'native' as atavistic and ignorant Other.[10] As Abdul JanMohammed has pointed out, such renderings are nothing but projections of the inadequacies sensed in modern cultures onto the figure of the native whose otherness is strategically represented as a gross deformity so as to deflect from and thereby preserve the structures of civilised mentality.[11] It is not from some ethnographic ingenuity but for the sake of this particular agenda, Lyons suggests, that anglophone writers have frequently attributed savage, even cannibalistic tendencies to those living outside the familiar territory of literate civilisation.[12] It seems legitimate, then, to regard it as a departure from established literary conventions, that Bouras denies her narrator the possibility to recuperate a sense of superiority in the act of inscribing non-literate alterity and instead reduces her to a mere figure of endurance, a caricature of what Mike Marais has called 'the intrepid tamer of the wild'.[13] In other words, she resists what Rosemary Marangoly George traces in earlier

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[10] Paul Lyons, 'From Man-Eaters to Spam-Eaters: Literary Tourism and the Cannibalism from Herman Melville to Paul Theroux', *Arizona Quarterly*, 51 (1995), 33-62.

[11] Abdul JanMohammed, 'Sophisticated Primitivism: The Syncretism of Oral and Literate Modes in Achebe's "Things Fall Apart"', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 15 (1984), 19-39.

[12] Hence, too, the insistent demonisation of the illiterate recorded by Goetsch, Mace and Wolfe in nineteenth-century fiction. Cf. Jane Mace and Mary Wolfe, 'That Old Story: Illiterates and Fiction', in *Living Literacies: Papers from a Conference on Multiple Literacies and Lifelong Learning*, ed. F. Savitsky (London: Language and Literacy Unit, 1995), pp. 37-42; Paul Goetsch, 'Der Analphabet in der englischen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Motive und Themen in englischsprachiger Literatur als Indikatoren literaturgeschichtlicher Prozesse: Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Theodor Wolpers*, ed. by Heinz-Joachim Müllenbrock and Alfons Klein (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990), pp. 241-262.

[13] Mike Marais, '"Omnipotent Fantasies" of a Solitary Self: J. M. Coetzee's "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee"', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 29 (1993), 48-65.

male writers of stories of migration and what she identifies as the 'desire for sutured, secure (masculine) self-identity in a world where sure knowledge and fixities are always compromised'.[14] 'Mine is the defeat', Bouras has her narrator admit, 'for, try as I might, and I did try, I could not be what she and others wanted, could not become what her world demanded as a right' (*AO* 2). She finally understands 'the privilege and the poverty there is in being literate' (*AO* 7) and sees that '[h]ighly literate people [like her] cannot imagine a world without books, a world without the search, discovery and discipline of writing' (*AO* 130-1). 'For months', Gillian reflects,

> I had been using my own tools to shape a world I now know I can never live in, had been trying to make sense of the years spent feeling isolated because I have *ta grammata*, and because *ta grammata* I have are not the right ones. There I was struggling to write a biography of an illiterate person and becoming daily more aware of the contradictions involved in the task. (*AO* 9) (Cf. 83)

What she once identified as ignorance Gillian now understands as another form of knowledge. She comes to see herself as unenlightened in comparison to her mother-in-law and begins to accept that, in their relationship, she must assume the role of the pupil and learn the things Aphrodite deems necessary for her to know. 'Yiayia cannot read, write, ride a bicycle or drive a car', Gillian reflects. 'She has never worn makeup, stayed in hospital or had an operation. She cannot swim, and has only once been in a boat. She does not possess a clock or watch' (*AO* 96). Still, Gillian knows that in spite, or, in fact, *because* of such disadvantages, Yiayia is less deluded than people 'who try to nail time down by reducing it to space' (*AO* 96) and who have 'imbibed the notion of flatness through different maps and projections' (*AO* 95). More importantly even, she knows the older woman's consciousness not to be burdened with the kind of extravagant and seemingly useless skills and insights that cluster her own mind. Aphrodite's knowledge, though rudimentary, is absolutely essential to the continuity of life in her village. Yiayia can 'kill rabbits and hens and use up every portion of a pig. She has a huge store of genealogical data, and a sizeable store of *mirologia*, the songs of fate sung at funerals. She can lay out a corpse' (*AO* 96). '[H]er own small world has made mine larger', Gillian admits in the end. 'She has given me, strange though it may seem, a link to my own past' (*AO* 7-8).

For Gillian, her own past is no longer symbolised by the spectacular monuments of ancient history sought out by so many other travellers to Greece. She has learnt to recognise it in the stories she unearths herself by listening to the women around her and learning to respect the historical significance of their silent 'gestures against the meaninglessness of the civil

[14] George, p. 200.

war, and against their own sons' senselessness in risking, and ultimately sacrificing, everything for the sake of empty ideology' (*AO* 90). Gillian realises that without her writing them down, these gestures would pass into oblivion. If she did not accept the role of the biographer which fate seems to have ascribed her, the treasures stored in her mother-in-law's memory, in 'the precious storehouse of the oral/illiterate person' (*AO* 66), would be lost forever. In recording Aphrodite's history, Gillian secures Aphrodite the place in history which she would otherwise be denied. Apart from addressing the possibilities of an individual's metaphysical survival in the recollections of others, *Aphrodite and the Others* even *exemplifies* such survival by presenting its central character not only as actively involved in certain historical events, but also as product of an active remembering.

Gillian composes her *pethera's* biography only after Aphrodite has died, selecting and arranging the notes, letters and documents she collected or wrote while Aphrodite was still alive. Thus the *re*-collection of the character forms as intrinsic a part of the novel as the actual gathering of facts during that same character's lifetime. The *memory*, the *idea* of the character is invested with the same textual substance as her actual life. Put down on paper, it obtains material reality and becomes an illustration of the deceased's story continuing beyond her death. Rather than separating actual from textual life, the event of Aphrodite's death seems to be embedded between the two and to make both together readable as a coherent whole. Ultimately, Aphrodite's dying comes to mark an open ending. Gillian's explicit and implicit reflections on how the illiterate Aphrodite survives in another's (or in *an Other's*) consciousness and eventually is appropriated into a literate discourse may be read as critical comments on twentieth-century western historiography in general. Arguably, Bouras calls in question the strategic occlusion of any life-story that fails to corroborate the construction of Southern Europe as the cradle of western civilisation from official European history. Her reinvention of non-literacy as an aspect of *European* cultural history effectively destabilises the popular myth of the 'grand narrative of progress'[15] of European civilisation. The stories excavated by Gillian do not support the image of the enduring glamour of ancient Hellas. In more than one sense, they direct the reader away from the sites in which that glamour seems to be still alive, taking her not only on a journey to unknown Greek villages and unknown landmarks in Greek history, but also to Australia, the furthest point to which Greek travellers have ever removed themselves from Greece in truly vast numbers.

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[15] Helen Carr, 'American Primitives', *The Yearbook of English Studies: Ethnicity and Representation in American Literature*, 24 (1994), 191-212 (p. 199).

The significance of the journeys performed by the narrative itself becomes obvious when one bears in mind the conflicting associations which the Eastern Mediterranean evokes in Australian cultural consciousness. Apart from an important destination on the itinerary of most Australians travelling to Europe to trace their cultural origins, Greece is also the original home of many migrants for whom the cultural alienation and displacement they suffered upon their arrival in Australia must have been exacerbated by the foreignness of the English language and the concomitant feeling of having been transported into a state of complete illiteracy.[16] Bouras discursively re-exports linguistic deprivation and cultural disadvantage to Europe, by returning to the alleged birthplace of western civilisation and representing it, rather than, as is far more common, *Australia*, as a complete cultural wasteland. With this provocative manoeuvre, she not only deflates established notions of Europe's cultural sovereignty over its former colonies. She also finds an effective mode of departure from the trajectory along which narratives of exploration or travel traditionally seem to evolve: Rather than a widening of the explorer's or the traveller's horizon she comes to identify a growing awareness of boundaries, of borders, of one's own (epistemological and linguistic) limitations as the traveller's most essential experience on her passage into foreign territory. This fundamental difference between literary accounts of imperialistic expansion on the one hand, of the experience of migration in postcolonial times on the other, also necessitates a new form of closure. Gillian no longer endeavours to return to the metropolis which she has left. She opts for a life away from Melbourne, her 'spiritual home' (*AO* 2), thereby denying her readers a 'proper' ending in the form of a homecoming and reinforcing the inconclusiveness of her narrative. In so doing she offers a potentially unsatisfactory, yet probably the most appropriate expression of her own enduring speechlessness at her late new (m)Other's ability to exist without the world of letters she herself used to believe so absolutely indispensable.

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[16] Cf. Stephen Castles, *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia*, 3rd edition (Annandale: Pluto Press Australia, 1992).

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Asimina Karavanta

The Greek Ideal in Patricia Storace's *Dinner with Persephone* and Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*

Abstract

Following James Clifford's analysis of 'dwelling-in-travel' that challenges the objective and 'imperial eye' of a 'sophisticated traveller', this essay explores the dynamics of the Greek 'ideal' in Patricia Storace's and Christa Wolf's literary travel narratives. Through a close reading of both texts, it provides an analysis of these two literary travel narratives and the different ways in which their authors challenge and overcome or simply reaffirm and solidify the limits of travel writing in their attempt to demystify and rewrite the inheritance of the Greek 'ideal' as the origin of the West.

In the sixteenth century, the expansionist policies of the European imperial nations were facilitated by the science and art of travelling as a systematic way of discovering lands with resources suitable for exploitation, which travel writing recreated for the Western imaginary. Travel writing thus accelerated the project of modernity by complementing the Western Self, the traveller/narrator, through the Other that often held the double position of a seemingly fixed object of analysis but also complex subject to be engaged in an encounter. As such an immobile but also dense object and site of travel study, Greece was often visited as the intimate albeit distant Other within the Western Self, a role that emerged from its position as the 'cradle' of the Western civilisation that has sought in Greece the symbol of its 'planetary consciousness'.[1] Being the lighthouse guiding the Western traveller to the path of 'sweetness and light' of the Hellenic spirit,[2] Greece was thus offered to the traveller as the 'providence land' of the 'classical education's promised truth'[3] and seen as the continuation of the Roman *humanitas.*[4] This 'promised truth', upheld Greece as the symbol of civilisation that 'provided

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1 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York & London: Routledge, 1992), p. 14.

2 This 'maturity' of the Greek spirit was what J. J. Winckelmann called 'the humanity of the Greeks' (*Die Menschlichkeit der Griechen*) and Matthew Arnold represented as the embodiment of 'sweetness and light' that could function as a measure of the West in opposition to its 'immature' and 'dark' others.

3 Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation. Enlightenment, Colonization and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) p. 22.

4 Humboldt, for instance, related the Greek notion of *paideia* to the Roman *veritas*, which is a fixed truth that can be reached with the 'correct' education.

Europeans with a powerful reserve of the imagination to which they could return again and again to define the value of their own national traditions'.[5]

This forced resurrection of ancient Greek culture, invoked in the writings of the European travellers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was conducive to a new sense of origin or 'proper beginning' for the emerging powers of the West that recognised in the classical world – Ancient Greece as the beginning and Rome as the mature continuity and fulfilment of the Hellenic spirit –[6] 'the European ties to civilisation's sacred origins'.[7] By the nineteenth century, the era of its transformation into a nation-state, Greece had already been doubly colonised as a narrative of the Western imaginary: first, in the form of a celebratory historical narrative that put the reality of its land and people under erasure and, then, in the form of a travel narrative that would interpret the social and historical aspects of the Greek 'ideal' as the 'pure beginning' and the sole property of the West available to be repossessed by the cultured traveller.

In this essay, I analyse the narrative structure and the ideological haunting of this 'ideal' in Patricia Storace's *Dinner with Persephone: Travels in Greece* (1996) and Christa Wolf's *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays* (1984)[8]. Through these two texts, I explore how the narrative inheritance of the Greek 'ideal' is transformed in the twentieth century that bears witness to the revival of the literary tradition of the 'sophisticated traveller'[9] whose understanding of identity, be it individual or national, is more politically and less mythically orientated. I compare the two texts as two contemporary rewritings of the Greek 'ideal', now deconstructed and demystified through its survival in the contemporary history of Greece, in the context of what

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5 Artemis Leontis, *Topographies of Hellenism* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 45.

6 In *America's Shadow* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), William V. Spanos develops a compelling argument about the way Western scholarship portrays Greece as the foundation stone of a civilization that Rome brings to maturity and solidifies in the process of the construction of its Empire that then stands as the blueprint for the European empires of modernity. Spanos' astounding analysis of the relationship between Greece, Rome and the Western discourses of history and philosophy discloses the reductive reading of Greece as the ideal beginning of the Western civilization to show how the idea of culture that the West promotes is indissolubly related with the systematic colonisation of other peoples and their lands.

7 Leontis, p. 66.

8 Another more recent text is Sofka Zinovieff's *Eurydice Street* (London: Granta Publications, 2004) that narrates the author and her family's relocation in Athens and explores Greek life and culture primarily from the perspective of the metropolitan area of the capital and the privileged life in Vouliagmeni, a rich and beautiful southern suburb of Athens. For a discussion of a range of texts in this genre, see David Wills, 'British Accounts of Residency in Greece, 1945-2004', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 23: 1 (May 2005): 177-97.

9 James Clifford, *Routes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 66.

James Clifford has defined as a more self-conscious idea of travel that 'has an inextinguishable taint of location by class, gender, race, and a certain literariness' and, hence, operates like a 'translation term'[10] that ensures intimacy and distance, knowledge and estrangement at the same time. The first and evident difference between Storace's and Wolf's texts is their respective claim as narratives: the first announces itself to be a piece of travel writing while the second represents itself as a fictional piece followed by essays that record the writer's travel experiences in Greece. This structural difference produces another important difference between the two texts: if in Storace's text travelling is the incentive to write, in Wolf's text writing is the incentive to travel. While Wolf pursues the mythical through the historical and political reality of contemporary Greece constantly interrupted by Aeschylus's tragedy and the reticent figure of Cassandra who haunts her, Storace begins her travels in Greece as she emerges in its everyday reality and culture in order to articulate its present through its conjunction with its past, myths and history.

Ventriloquising the Other: The Fallen Idea of Greece

Storace's *Dinner with Persephone* is a first-person narration of the writer's experiences in Greece during the year that she spends immersing herself in the Greek culture. Her narrative is structured in chapters that follow her exploration of the Greek land, its history, myths, sites, monuments, people, politics and food and reads as an exhaustive recording of contemporary Greece in the nineties through the eyes of a woman who is an intellectual and a poet engaged with the art of the 'literary travel narrative'.[11] She thus produces a text that, despite its shortcomings, is not the fruit of a tourist's orientation towards a foreign land but the literary product of what Clifford calls 'dwelling-in-travel' that 'affords a view of human location as constituted by displacement as much as by stasis'.[12] To 'dwell-in-travel', Storace tastes everyday life in the corners of her neighbourhood and the margins of the Greek language that she explores in sources extending from history and myths to untranslatable concepts such as *filotimo, mirologhia,*

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10 Clifford, p. 39.

11 Clifford analyzes the relationship between the 'literary travel narrative' and the narrative art of ethnography and points to the anthropologist's growing awareness of the 'poetical and political contingency of fieldwork'. See pp. 66-7 in *Routes*.

12 Clifford, p. 2.

xenitia[13] and even Artemidorus's *Oneirokritika* (a cult text about the interpretation of dreams).

This 'dwelling-in-travel' takes the form of chapter episodes that depict the everyday life of contemporary Greek culture, interwoven with Storace's reading of myth and history. In her effort to understand the history of modern Greece from the perspective of a foreigner, the author invokes a parade of different voices represented as the native informants involved in a conversation that enlightens and bewilders her. The structure of each episode is made of characters that are either persistent figures in her text, like her friend Kostas, or appear as cultural stereotypes that operate as vehicles for her analyses of concepts, myths, history, land, and people. Each chapter is thus an excavation of elements that bring together myths and their interpretations like Alexander and the mermaid[14] delivered by friends or people that she either accidentally or purposefully encounters.

At the beginning of the text, these voices are interspersed as the thoughts and ideas of her friends and the people that she encounters in her travels in a seemingly natural or uneventful way. As the narrative proceeds, however, they develop as types or stock characters that voice general statements about Greek culture as if it were an immobile or fixed object. These stock characters enable the author to sustain a contemplative distance from her object and site of exploration and balance the dwelling with the travelling 'spatial practices'[15] as through these other voices she avoids the trap of being identified with surreptitious generalisations that would disqualify her narrative. One such recurrent voice is the author's friend Kostas, who is represented as the voice of a severe critique of the ills and paradoxes of contemporary Greek reality, which he tends to attribute to the modern Greeks' delusional sense of their relation to the ancient Greek ideal and the false and farcical claims they lay on that past. Here is a representative example of Kostas's irreverent assessment, worth quoting at length:

> Sometimes these stories, which in our cultural politics are supposed to prove our direct descent from the ancient Greeks, 'the greatest people in history', as the voice of the *son et lumière* at the Parthenon says, actually came to us through the European travellers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They would be astonished as they passed through villages that villagers knew nothing of the ancient mythology they themselves were brought up on, and would tell them stories out of ancient Greek literature, which would then evolve into folk tales, or be grafted onto them. I remember an anecdote about a Philhellene fighter during the 1821 War of Independence, who told some klepht leader that he reminded him of Achilles, or some such compliment. And the klepht said to him, 'Who was Achilles? Did the musket of Achilles kill many?' But we will never know the proportions of import and export

[13] Storace, Patricia, *Dinner With Persephone* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), pp. 162-63.
[14] Ibid., pp. 102-05.
[15] Clifford, p. 66.

> in these stories, because, and often by design, we are poor historians and great fabulists. We accuse you of having no grasp of history; Greeks have even less sense of history than Americans, only a kind of imperialism with regard to the stories of the past. Who else would be so blindly possessive of antiquity that they would call their air force academy the School of Icarus, invoking a patron who after all couldn't fly and falls to his death because of faulty equipment? [...] I would rather that you not see it.[16]

By representing Kostas as the Greek intellectual who can deconstruct the lessons of Greek history with a critical detachment rather than simply adopt them with undiscerning obedience to the claims of the nation, Storace differentiates him from the other Greek voices or types whose *naiveté*, lack of education, ethnocentric background or chauvinistic and often sexist beliefs blind them to the truth of the cultural politics of contemporary Greece. For instance, the uneducated guerrillas and peasants of the War of Independence are mocked for their ignorance and portrayed as symptoms of a lack of historical sense that permeates and determines contemporary Greek reality in general, according to Kostas and, as I will demonstrate below, Storace. Neither the author nor her character of course refers to the double colonisation that Kostas's example accidentally reveals: that of the Ottoman Empire – the colonial ruler – and the British, French and Russian allies that constituted the body of 'Philhellenes'. The first was a four-century occupation of a land that resulted in the forced ignorance and illiteracy of its people and the second was a sustained intellectual and political patronising of the illiterate *klephtes*, who, according to the European imperial logic, were naturally incapable of ruling themselves and thus needed their foreign allies to run to their rescue to aid and civilise them. Moreover, there is no reference to the spirit and strength of these guerrillas to fight despite their ignorance and frequent lack of a coherent and organised plan against the enemy; in other words, there is no mention of the force of these people to overthrow their coloniser despite their lesser or nonexistent sense of history. To those two waves of colonisation, one could add a third one: the colonisation of historical memory evidenced in the misrepresentation of the history of the anonymous fighters. Instead of disclosing the *klephtes*' miseducation by their western intellectual patrons, Storace chooses to shift the reader's attention to their ignorance or misappropriation of the classical origins of their land recaptured in their folklore.

Kostas then continues with another example of the Greeks' 'blind possession of antiquity'[17] by offering a rather debatable interpretation of the myth of Icarus who, in his words, is the symbol of a lethal fall that occurs due to his 'faulty equipment' rather than his hubris. Again Kostas, or Storace

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16 Storace, pp. 158-59.

17 Ibid., p. 158.

through him, conveniently forgets that Icarus can also be interpreted as the symbol of the overreacher who dares and defies. This 'inadvertently comic' example of a Greek Air Force that adopts the name and symbol of Icarus who finally falls may harbour another possible interpretation. The air force motto, '*o tolmon nika*' ('who dares wins'), suggests that Icarus's fall occurs after he has achieved the impossible in a spirit of daring and defiance. In the light of such an equally un-ironic but in the context understandably earnest and wishful interpretation, the use of Icarus as an emblem may not be as ludicrous as Storace's Greek debunker might have us believe.[18]

Kostas's awkward interpretation of the myth could of course be nothing more than the simpleminded thought or misreading of one of the characters/voices/types that Storace invites in her text. It is however only one in a series of similar episodes that transform all of these Greek voices drawing on, reading, interpreting, and critiquing their culture into a systematically distorted interpretation of contemporary Greek culture as chauvinistic and patriarchal. For instance, in the chapter 'Polytechnic night',[19] Storace presents Christos, a neighbour's relative, as the example of a Greek macho type whose opinion about the conflict between Greece and Skopje (FYROM), regarding the name of Macedonia, represents him as the radical other of the intellectual and critical voice of Kostas, that is, as the imbecile whose nationalist arguments are founded on a childish rhetoric. Christos's ethnocentric pride is then ridiculed and corrected by the writer's cautious and paternalistic sentiments: 'the name is not a piece of magic that will magically secure the borders. You will just keep yourselves shouting across the borders like children having tantrums, "Is not Macedonia" "Is too"'.[20] And when Christos voices his inane suggestion that the Greek riot police should beat the anarchists and perpetrators of the violent incidents on the 'Polytechneio' celebration day to death,[21] his ludicrous remark becomes an opportunity for the author to issue another condescending statement: 'the junta could not have been imposed from outside, but represented one genuine political impulse in a country which has an authoritarian tradition, at times

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18 Another enlightened Greek (in Storace's terms) is the teacher-friend who tells the story of modern Greece's lamentable 'ancestolatry' by instancing the refusal of a group of students to read Virgil's *The Aeneid*, which they considered a cheap imitation of Homer (pp. 16-7).

19 Storace, pp. 188-90.

20 Ibid., p. 189.

21 November 17th is the celebration day that commemorates the resistance of students and other citizens occupying the Athens National Technical University ('Polytechneio') in 1973, one year before the fall of the seven-year dictatorship. On that November night, the military forces of the junta broke through the doors of the University killing, wounding and capturing the protesters.

paternalistic, and at others dictatorial'.[22] This event is symptomatic of Storace's effort to understand modern Greek history from the perspective of an 'objective eye', whose foreignness is the self-evident proof of her detachment and thus objectivity. At an earlier moment in the narrative, for instance, while visiting Saint Andrew's cathedral in Patras, she reacts to the priest's nostalgic reference to the lost lands of the occupied territories of Cyprus by the Turkish regime by claiming that no version of the story about the 1974 Cyprus invasion can be a 'reliable version of what had happened'.[23] Obviously, she is led to that conclusion not because of her profound knowledge of the history of the Turkish invasion and further occupation of Cyprus but because she mistrusts the Greek priest's emotional attachment and thus lack of critical detachment from the events.

Safe as Storace's distance from the Greeks' sense of history might be, my contention is that her views suggest the 'imperial eye' of the Western traveller, who, in the manner of the Philhelenes to whom Kostas refers when he explains how they contributed to the miseducation of the Greek peasants, can afford to have a wiser and more complete interpretation of the history of the native and the native's attachment to her/his land. The wounded memories and traumatic events of the history of the place (like the invasion of Cyprus and the period of the junta among others in Modern Greek history), which naturally lead to the people's emotionally charged and often jaundiced responses, are thus presented as further evidence of the Modern Greeks' lack of sense of history that can only be recuperated by the resident intellectual, keen to impress the dispassionate foreign traveller.[24]

Storace's real Greece falls far short of the Greek 'ideal'; in her bemused eyes, the country occupies a space 'at the intersection of a prostitute and a saint'.[25]The views summarised by this statement require the authorisation and authentication of a 'real Greek', and that is the function of the resident cynic. Again, Kostas provides this insight: 'keep in mind what Emmanuel Roidis, our great unread nineteenth-century novelist, said about my country: "Every nation has its cross to bear: In England, for example, it's the weather. In Greece, it's the Greeks"'.[26] Storace's characters allow for a form of

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22 Storace, p. 190.

23 Ibid., p. 61.

24 In the same vein, the affiliations that Storace sees between Greece and Turkey denigrate both cultures as she represents them like the immature children of the West (pp. 388-89).

25 Ibid., p. 3.

26 Ibid., p. 37. This is only remarkable coming from a Greek; in another sense, it is but a mere commonplace in the accounts of many a Grand Tourist. For one instance, see Shelley's comment in an 1818 letter to Leigh Hunt from Naples: 'There are two Italies […] one composed of the green earth and the transparent sea, and the mighty ruins of ancient time, and aerial mountains, and the warm and radiant atmosphere which is interfused through all

ventriloquism that claims to represent the ills and blemishes of the culture Storace visits while she appears to remain silent. Like puppets, the Greek voices accidentally reveal the truth, unspeakable by the contemporary visitor, of a noble land and a grand past that is, alas, held captive in the vulgar hands of its unworthy inhabitants.

Despite several instances in the text that betray a more nuanced understanding on the part of the writer of a country that is culturally heterogeneous, and a site of encounters that require mutuality and true human empathy,[27] Storace insists on delegating authorial responsibility to those native voices called upon to dramatise the stereotypical condition of an ancient land whose great past its contemporary inhabitants have not quite grasped. The assumed reality of these voices – the fact that they are people that she meets rather than characters that she makes up – points to a broader problematic: what is the line that separates a travel account from a piece of fiction? Put differently, how does travel writing negotiate its own textuality? If every travel text is unavoidably a fictional mediation, a refinement of the *idea* of a land woven out of its myths, histories, monuments and inheritance to other traditions that claim it as an origin of a larger community, as Western civilisation claims of Greece, then it would be more appropriate for the author of the travel text to historicise her own position in these fictional processes that permeate her narrative rather than feign objectivity. Storace seems to be aware of the fictionalising aspects of her narrative position at the outset of her narrative that opens with the traditional beginning of a Greek fairy tale: 'Arkhé tou paramythiou, kalispera sas' ('The fairy tale begins, good evening to you').[28] However, she soon shifts to a register that presumes a different (and less innocent) authorial relation to her subject. Hastily assuming that Greek voices speak with authenticity and local integrity,

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things. The other consists of the Italians of the present day, their works and ways. The one is the most sublime and lovely contemplation that can be conceived by the imagination of man; the other is the most degraded, disgusting and odious', cited in Robert Eisner, *Travelers to an Antique Land: The History and Literature of Travel to Greece* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), p. 12.

27 Such moments of empathy are related in Storace's own authorial voice and are therefore free of the stilted mediation of the presumed authenticity of the native witness: 'The proprietress is watching our glasses and brings us another carafe and more bread – I recognise this vigilance and custodial tenderness in her cooking, her well-tended garden, her well-tended clients. She looks to me to be one of those people who think their way into the world through a skill, who develop the personal excellence of a gift into a principle, a successful balance of herbs and meat leading to a carefully nurtured garden and animals, leading to nourishing people, leading to thoughts about conserving the fertility of soil, and on to an awareness of the meaning of being a part of a community, all consequences maybe of experimenting with oregano and cinnamon' (p. 151).

28 Storace, p. 3.

especially when uttering self-deprecating truths, she settles for an easy nativism, which manages both to condescend by using a Greek to castigate his kind and to conform to stereotypes by rendering even those supposedly insightful Greeks as loud, opinionated and eager to please.

The characters' aphoristic statements operate like a buffer zone behind which the author is ensconced: her own misconceptions, half truths, hasty realisations but also beautiful and engaging insights are never directly revealed as hers as she recoils from historicising her own dwelling and travelling as an American woman poet in a strange and culturally different land. Her unwillingness to contemplate upon the complex condition of her dwelling-in-travel symptomatically reveals what Clifford calls the 'traduttore in the tradittore',[29] that is, the betrayal and loss that travel as an act of translation necessitates. Being acts of translation, acts of 'understanding, appreciating, describing' but also missing and distorting reality,[30] travel narratives often misrepresent the Other as a local, parochial and immobile object juxtaposed with the cosmopolitan traveller who studies this object from a privileged distance. In such cases, however, the negotiation between travelling and dwelling comes to an abrupt end and fails to reveal the complex itinerary both of the traveller and the location, for 'the location is an itinerary rather than a bounded site – a series of encounters and translations'.[31] For all her apparent desire to experience (and expose) a real Greece as such a complex itinerary, Storace is ultimately more at ease in an illusory space animated by her own fascination: the land of myth where one loves to travel but dislikes actually to dwell in it.

Making Travel Fiction, 'Dwelling-in-Travel'

By contrast, Christa Wolf's *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays* is a text that toils with the ideological weight of Greece as an origin of civilisation by exposing the fiction that conditions it as such. Her text begins with a first-person narration of her character Cassandra that gives shape to the eponymous novel followed by a section entitled 'Conditions of a Narrative', written in the writer's voice and consisting of two travel reports on the tracing of the mythical figure of Cassandra in Greece, a work diary and a letter. Wolf's quest of the mythical figure of Cassandra, not only as an elusive figure in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* but also as a symbol of the predicament of the 'unconstituted other', of the constituency punished with

[29] Clifford, p. 42.
[30] Ibid., p. 42.
[31] Ibid., p. 11.

banishment and then death because of her clairvoyance and unanswerable difference, is the undercurrent of the author's travels in Greece. For Wolf, Greece as a site operates as the realistic stage of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, which the author reads during her travels in Greece while envisioning and giving flesh and bones to her heroine Cassandra.

Three spatiotemporal threads constitute Wolf's text: the mythical, the historical and the fictional. Cassandra becomes the figuration of these three threads subtly interwoven as Wolf composes the fictional setting of this intriguing mythical character. Consequently, the figure of Cassandra becomes Wolf's confidante and travel companion, an interlocutor concocted out of mythical, historical, fictional and travel elements and a figure that haunts the writer who pursues her shadow and silence to give it flesh, bones, and word. Contemporary Greece is represented in the context of the Cold War, its ideological barriers and the imminent threat of a nuclear disaster, and engaged as another fictional character rather than a foreign site realistically portrayed. Even the most 'real' moments in her travel narrative, when for instance she has to face the immigration bureaucracy at the Greek police station, gradually become rarer and seem more like interruptions of the main text, which is Wolf's encounter with the spectre of Cassandra in an ancient and simultaneously modern Greece, in Europe. Her travel log is a narration of Wolf's encounter with the *topos*[32] of Cassandra, with Cassandra's spectral presence in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* often quoted during Wolf's travel, which begins in the strange land of the familiar, in the streets of Berlin as it was before the demolition of the 'Iron Wall' and the fall of the 'iron curtain'. Wolf and her husband, her travel companion, 'alien, strangely moved, unrecognizable', experience the state of being 'untraceable, unregistered shadowy figures'[33] as they drive through a city that is and is not theirs. They know that they must abide by a pact that allows them to be strangers visiting the other side of their city to which they do and yet do not belong. Her narrative therefore begins with a historicising of her position as a traveller estranged not only from the 'other' but also from the 'same' or at least the other half of the 'same' that takes the figure of West Berlin, where by mere accident or fate the writer and her husband miss their plane to Greece only to

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[32] This Greek word derives from the Ancient Greek verb *topazo*, which means 'to contemplate', 'to muse upon', 'to envision'. *Topos*, as opposed to 'space' or site, does not connote the existence of fixed borders; it is constantly defined by the thinking performed within its realm, a thinking not conditioned by boundaries. Thus, Cassandra's *topos*, her mythical, fictional and historical web, is constantly revealed and woven as Wolf's quest renders Cassandra's figure more visible and communicative.

[33] Christa Wolf, *Cassandra. A Novel and Four Essays*, Trans. Jan Van Heurck (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984), p. 144.

enjoy the forbidden part of the capital of the East German Democratic Republic.

Wolf's travel, then, begins at home as a journey of *peripeteia*,[34] that is, of reversal, of unexpected turns and twists, rather than as a planned trip with a safe and predestined point of arrival. In its classical sense, this term connotes the sudden change of fortune that brings about an unexpected and inconceivable state of things, which reveals the previous order as chaotic and unstable. For Wolf and her husband, travelling thus becomes a border crossing of uncertainty and risk. Their predicament is complicated further when the author invites the spectre of Cassandra to haunt her from the very beginning of her *peripeteia* and stand as a symbol of the writer's displacement in the streets of the intimately strange city of West Berlin. Wolf is 'taken captive' by Cassandra, 'herself made an object of others',[35] in whom the writer develops 'an unqualified trust'.[36] Her travel report, which emerges out of 'the accidental surfacing and gradual fabrication of a literary personage',[37] then differs from conventional travel accounts that begin with a presumed objectivity that aims to 'produc[e] the 'rest of the world' for European readerships'[38] often from the perspective of an 'imperial eye' and a ventriloquised tongue (such as is evidenced in Storace's text). Instead, Wolf's reports, which frame her novel *Cassandra* and accompany it in the German and English editions of the novel, point to the question of the fictional processes that travel writing necessarily involves. As opposed to Storace's text that takes the form of a realistic and thus supposedly objective account of the Greek land, Wolf creates a kinship and, therefore, an indissoluble relationship between the mythical – the figure of Cassandra that emanates from Aeschylus' *Oresteia* – the fictional – Wolf's rewriting of the figure of Cassandra – and the social – the historical and political conditions of Wolf's narrative as the author travels from East Berlin to Greece, the site where she can invoke and envision the figure of Cassandra. Being haunted by the spectral figure and the accompanying mythical, literary and historical discourses, Wolf admits that Greece is viewed as the *topos* that will inspire her to turn this double pursuit (Cassandra and Wolf pursuing each other) into a narrative. Displaced twice, a stranger both at home and in a foreign land, Wolf becomes a character that converses with the recurrent figure of Cassandra emerging from the *Oresteia* and the land of Greece. Cassandra's

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[34] 'A reversal is a change of the actions to their opposite […] and in accordance with probability or necessity', Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Richard Janko (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 52a 23-25.

[35] Wolf, p. 144.

[36] Ibid., p. 145.

[37] Ibid., p. 143.

[38] Pratt, p. 3.

'compulsion to see' underscores Wolf's compulsion to narrate and record her quest of the traces of this mythical figure. Cassandra, the quintessential foreigner, thus encounters Wolf, the displaced stranger.

On the plane, Greece is already anticipated as the place where 'everything is in its primitive state'.[39] As Greece looms in the horizon, Wolf invokes Cassandra's spectre in a series of questions: 'Why did she want to become like men? Why was it in fact a man's profession to be a seer? Had it always been so? If not, since when?'[40] According to the myth, Cassandra endorses a 'male logic' and 'chooses a man's profession when she trained to be a seeress'. This results in a series of persistent and impregnable questions that 'are able to free Cassandra from myth and literature'[41] and outline Wolf's travels in Greece then portrayed as a land of this quest rather than an exotic site of untainted purity. Hence, as the narrative of the travel report proceeds, there is interplay between the figure of Cassandra and the figure of Greece as a symbol of the West. In other words, Wolf's wonder and wandering, questioning and quest oscillate between Cassandra and Greece until the two become entangled and interrelated with Wolf moving from the one to the other or rather travelling *towards* the one – towards capturing and articulating the silence of the figure of Cassandra – and dwelling *in* the other – in the *topos* of the mythical figure, Athens and Crete, where Cassandra's voice is sought. The intertwining of these two objects of inquiry, Cassandra and Greece, precipitates the need to contemplate the meaning of Greek antiquity and Greece as an 'ideal', not simply as the 'childhood' of the Western man but as a 'multilayered problem',[42] which reveals a complex mythical and historical past that cannot be rewritten and interpreted without being reduced and appropriated.

Wolf assumes a critical distance from the simplistic identification of Greece with its antiquity and the glorification of the latter as a 'simple' and, therefore, happy origin by conditioning her quest of Cassandra in the everyday and historical reality of the ruins of the Greek antiquity as she encounters them in the contemporary reality of Greece. Instead of refuting the reality of the classical ideal that the Acropolis has come to represent,[43]

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39 Wolf, p. 153.

40 Ibid., p. 153.

41 Ibid., p. 153.

42 Ibid., p. 154.

43 One such example is Freud's response to the sight of the Acropolis; on his first visit to the site and in disbelief he cries out 'So it really *does* exist – the sea-serpent we always disbelieved in' (cited in Gourgouris, p. 122). Gourgouris interprets Freud's famous passage from 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis' (1936) as symptomatic of the operative value of the Hellenic ideal as a foundation stone for the German national character. Gourgouris argues that this appropriation of the Hellenic ideal is 'in effect, its sublimation,

Wolf treads on the harsh reality of its 'rubble' and its 'lifeless stone' that reminds her of her 'inescapable and unacceptable' destiny to walk 'between mutely erect stone walls, under mute and meaningless skies'.[44] Acropolis emerges as this impossible border that stands between past and present, myth and history, reality and un-reality (an ideal, an origin) and thus reminds Wolf of her own 'inescapable' and indelible borders that she has left behind in her own divided and 'walled' country. Her evocation of the Berlin wall in the midst of her visit to the Acropolis is part of a narrative strategy that allows Wolf to eschew registering the 'foreign' and the 'other' as an 'ideal', a 'pure origin' and a 'mystical symbol' lying there to be deciphered by the objective and disinterested traveller. Wolf transposes the experience of the foreign land and its spectre, Cassandra, that is, the experience of 'origins' and myths, in the everyday and present reality of an East German woman who gains the privilege to travel beyond the 'walls' of her country and before the official end of the Cold War era that is inaugurated with the destruction of the Berlin Wall. This transposition takes two forms in Wolf's writing: she uses the land that her travel memoir narrates both as a space to discuss the present in its political complexity (the Berlin War, the atomic weapons and the technocratic modernity are important instances over which the author muses[45]), and as a *topos* where she can decipher the meaning of the spectral silhouette of Cassandra and, by consequence, the meaning of the mythical as it is interwoven with the historical, the political and the everyday. Standing before the *korai* of the Erechtheum, whose faces are engraved not only by grief but also by acid rain and pollution, Wolf wonders at the meaning of the concept of the 'civilised' that these statues are meant to divulge as they stand in the borderland between the past and the present:

> I understand: You, the need of the present-day city, were not compatible with the need of the stone maidens with their serene, proud bearing, who supported, for more than two thousand years, the canopy over the grave of the snake-king Cecrops, founder of Athens. The *korai*, the maidens, once the fertility goddess Persephone and her daughter, later reduced to supporting beams, now infertile, placed out of bounds. Shall I try to prevent them in the guise of symbols, not only while I am in Greece, but afterward, too? Shall I try to name the 'meaning' they stand for, which is really a non-meaning? The barbarism of the modern age. The question that disturbs me: Was there, is there, an alternative to this barbarism?[46]

The question that she posits before the *korai* is the question that the mythical spectre's haunting articulately sustains for Wolf. In the novel, Cassandra

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which is to say, its reinscription with new social meaning, its resocialization' and 'no less than an explicit and programmatic colonization of the ideal' (Gourgouris, p. 124).

44 Wolf, p. 158.

45 Ibid., pp. 228-30, 240-41.

46 Ibid., p. 159.

contemplates the same question of the concept of the civilised as she stands between friends and enemies, kin and strangers, Trojans and Greeks and experiences a 'desperate self-estrangement'[47] as truth, justice, and honour collapse into the ruins and the bloodshed of the machine of war unleashed by both the Trojans and the Greeks. Cassandra's travel from the concept of the 'same' to the concept of the 'other' and Wolf's travel from the land of the 'same' to the land of the 'other' point to the same question: what does it mean to be civilised, to be informed by the axiom of a superior and unique culture – the way the West sees itself – and to be the privileged owners of this 'superior civilisation', if such a thing exists?

While travelling in Crete, where Wolf admits that she 'was seeking the comparative time scale of the battle for Troy and the destruction of Minoan culture', she comes to the realisation that her quest for Cassandra and Greece as the land of her captivity necessitates a transference of a 'contemporary ideal to a mythological figure'.[48] This transference, which is related to the concept of travelling, that is, of moving away from a locus, a centre, a point of reference to the beyond, the outside, the ex-centric, is also a means of interpretation or, as Clifford puts it, an act of translation that aims at naming the site of its quest even as it fails fully and faithfully to represent it. Wolf pursues the mythical figure and its *topos* with the knowledge of this precipitated strategy of transferring to the other, be it Cassandra or Greece, an *a priori* interpretation of the other's symbolic value, for what else could that 'contemporary ideal' signify but an interpretation that precedes the act of interpreting, a presupposition that the inquiry is destined to prove accurate? Wolf's quest is embedded in a cyclical interpretative act that allows the writer to weave her quest into a web of interpretations that have preceded her encounter with Cassandra, ancient Greek culture and contemporary Greece, for to 'interpret means: to know the history of a phenomenon',[49] that is, it means to translate the 'other', as if its history and site were a manageable unit. Being aware of this circular motion of the act of interpretation, Wolf does not exhaust herself describing Greece and its inhabitants in vignettes of affected objectivity; instead she lets her pursuit unravel in the *topos* of Greece that becomes another character rather than a realistic stage objectively portrayed. In that sense, travelling for Wolf is a self-reflexive activity that should first and foremost question the traveller's own intentions, hidden or not, by revealing her engagement and interestedness in the object of her travels, the *topos*, which literally is an object of inquiry, investigation, supervision:

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47 Ibid., p. 36.
48 Ibid., pp. 183-184.
49 Ibid., p. 193.

> Besides curiosity, our own travels back and forth indicate need as well, but need for what? What do we seek, coming here from two such widely separated quarters of the globe, to this third place; remote, in fact, an island? What can it mean, the devotion we are ready to give a culture that was submerged two thousand years ago? The tolerance, of which we laid by a store before we even encountered the first material evidences of that culture, while at the same time we stand dismayed before the graves of people who died in this village ten, twenty, or fifty years ago? […]. Three thousand years from now, will there be anyone left here or anywhere else who still believes that the dead travel somewhere, and they need travelling provisions for their perhaps arduous and dismal journey, provision from the living that they are incapable of supplying themselves? Will anyone still think about making it easier for the dead? Will there still be some empathy, some memory, between living and dead Remembrance, storytelling, art?[50]

Wolf's wandering in this 'third place' becomes a wondering about the nature and reason of travelling; this wondering implies a distinction between the traveller as the one who is fully aware of her engagement and investment in the act of travelling as the act of translating a 'zone of contacts – blocked and permitted, policed and transgressive'[51] and the 'sophisticated traveller' whose orientation affects a dis-interestedness and an objectivity that would remind one of the empirical objectivity of the travellers of the scientific expeditions of the nineteenth century that aimed at creating not only scientific but also cultural cartographies of the world that under the aegis of the 'civilising mission of the Enlightenment' had to be determined according to a 'spatial economy of knowledge and power'.[52]

Wolf articulates the question without ever fully responding to it; yet the question haunts her travel-*peripeteia* in Crete as yet another spectre whose silence will never be deciphered. She thus shifts from questioning the reasoning behind her own travels to wondering about the travels of the dead of this 'third place' that she is discovering. This constant shift from her own position as a traveller and writer to the land and Cassandra's spectre results in a travel writing that lacks the organisation of detail and directionality of the character of the Greek locality as it is drawn in Storace's *Dinner with Persephone*. Wolf's aim is not so much to describe contemporary Greece and the way in which it regards itself in its relation with its ancient past, folklore and the strange and often incomprehensible customs of its inhabitants; it is rather to contemplate the nature of travelling together with the nature of myths and how they travel from one temporal dimension to another and from one *topos* to another and to do so in the land that is considered to be the literary and cultural origin of the Western tradition. It seems that she cannot

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50 Ibid., p. 189.
51 Clifford, p. 8.
52 Spanos, p. 44.

visit this 'origin' without affirming a goal, an initiative, some kind of a response to the question 'why travel'. The answer that she gives a few pages later is illuminating:

> To learn to read myth is a special kind of adventure. An art that presupposes a gradual, peculiar, transformation; a readiness to give oneself to the seemingly frivolous nexus of fantastic facts, of traditions, desires, and hopes, experiences and techniques of magic adapted to the needs of a particular group – in short, to another sense of the concepts of 'reality'. For me the structures at Knossos and Phaestos became animated by a throng of people – not at my first visit, but only gradually, in my memory. They were the Minoans. If you look for models of their features in the fresco portraits known as 'La Parisienne' [...] and the Prince of Lilies' [...] you may still encounter those features today, all of a sudden, in the young woman pressed against you in the bus, in a young man outside a village taverna. Now I could picture Minoan people of the most diverse professions, all delicately fitted into a hierarchically structured community (well, did you expect them to be free of hierarchy?). In this community, the priestly office of women, their presence at religious games, even their participation in dangerous exercises like bull-leaping, apparently are no more than relics of more ancient, matriarchal times. Thus, the ardour and enthusiasm of Sue and Helen, when we meet them again in front of the female idols in the Heraklion museum, their almost tender concern for the clay figures of pregnant women and mothers with newborn children at their breasts, seem to have an irrational streak. But I, too, am deeply moved by these little terracotta figurines which are not the image of ideals like the art of classical antiquity but bear all the traces of everyday life, the prints of the fingers which formed them. They convey to me far more powerfully than any Apollo of Belvedere the feeling that at bottom these people who prayed to, or thanked, a goddess for children four or five thousand years ago and more were people just like us.[53]

In this long excerpt, one notices how subtly but firmly Wolf interweaves the 'adventure' of travel with that of reading myths. Instead of visiting Greece like a tourist ready to reaffirm the proper answers to the cultural and symbolic signification of Greece as origin, Wolf allows herself to land in this strange and 'third place' and confront her own project, a book about Cassandra and Greece: the former, a spectre with a voice but without language speaking to an East German woman writer who seeks the mythical figure in the ancient Greek tragedy of *Oresteia*, in her travels in Greece and in her visions of Greece and its contemporary and classical culture, and the latter, a cultural symbol, an 'image of that culture from which they [the Western public] would have been glad to derive their own'.[54] While pursuing the mythical figure of Cassandra and interrogating the reasons for her need to resuscitate her in her contemporary age and through her contemplate the experience of words and interpretation in a world where the quest for truth is

[53] Wolf, pp. 196-97.
[54] Ibid., p. 198.

forgotten,[55] Wolf also sees travelling as a way of reaffirming and fixing Greece as a myth or, following Melanie Klein, as an 'archaic imago',[56] namely, an elusive, almost primitive and thus often distorted ideal, which functions as a symbol that facilitates the self-identification of the West through its forgotten but necessary 'Other' constituted by ancient Greece and its classical tradition.[57] Through its past, Greece is assigned this position of this idealised 'Other', at the expense of its actual, historical presence. For Wolf, the 'Western public' sees the 'archaic imago' of that culture as 'cheerful, productive; as leaving the individual scope for development between freedom and obligation; and above all, as a *peaceful* culture not imprinted with the code of inevitable self-incurred destruction'.[58] She therefore proceeds to comment on the construction of Greece as a symbol of civilisation itself while visiting the ruins of Knossos and Phaestos and trying to visualise the Minoan culture:

> Its annihilation, people liked to think, was attributable solely to natural catastrophes. They did not want (if at all possible) to see it exposed to disintegration by social processes, to decay by exhaustion and by the perversion of a formerly productive impulse…Everything that we are unable to achieve was attributed to them: the ability to find meaning in their work; to integrate themselves into a social and religious community without an accompanying need to reduce themselves to an automatic level of functioning: to live without internal and external violence – an island of perfection.[59]

Wolf here touches upon the difficult and dangerous act of reading myths and exposes the processes of projection and introjection of the West before the historically complex phenomenon of Greek culture. Standing before the

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55 At the moment of the fall of Troy, Wolf's Cassandra contemplates the power of words to frame and thus distort reality to the point of destruction because of the inevitable distance of words from reality: 'Words. Everything I tried to convey about that experience was, and is, paraphrase. We have no name for what spoke out of me. I was its mouth, and not of my o2wn free will. It had to subdue me before I would breathe a word it suggested. It was the enemy who spread the tale that I spoke "the truth" and that you all would not listen to me' (Wolf, p. 106).

56 Melanie Klein calls this 'ideal' an 'archaic imago' to define its haunting, possessive and often derogatory nature as it represents something impossible, unattainable. It is interesting that this 'archaic imago', often describing the symbolic presence of parents in the subject's life, can acquire a derogatory significance, as it is a distorted and un-realistic ideal that really belongs to the field of the fantastic. In this light, Greece can be seen as an 'archaic imago' in the way it functions as a distorted ideal in the European imaginary.

57 In *Power, Politics and Culture*, ed. by Gauri Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), Edward Said calls this a relationship of 'complementarity between Europe and its others' that often relies on hostile terms; in other words, it is a relationship of 'complementary enemies' (p. 385).

58 Wolf, p. 198.

59 Ibid., p. 198.

ruins, the Western traveller often thinks of them as the relics of accidents (natural disasters) rather than as the signifiers of the fall of a civilisation and its communities, which, like all complex political and historical systems, resistant to the coming changes, disintegrated and in the process vanished as their *raison d'être* came to a dead end. However, the narrative of Greece as an 'ideal' protects the traveller from such a reading that could undo her comfortable, almost sacred, belief in the existence of such perfect origins that would be destroyed only by natural causes. On this 'island of perfection', Wolf dares to remember against this blinding faith when she invokes the myth of the abduction of the Phoenician princess Europa by the Cretan Minos transformed into a bull: 'Were we not meant to realise that in this mythological version Europe was named after a princess from the Near East who was kidnapped and raped by the Cretans – a name, by the way, that means 'the dismal one'?[60] This myth signifies for her the complex reality of Greece as an 'idea' or 'ideal'. As opposed to an 'ideal' or an 'origin' unaltered by time, Greece is represented as a crossroads of cultures, worlds and experiences, creation and decay, monuments and ruins rather than as a symbol of perfection and unaltered beauty.

Travelling for Wolf reveals how the past is constituted for the tourists to see what 'they want to see'.[61] Haunted by the figure of Cassandra and the 'archaic imago' of Greece, Wolf ends her adventure with the realisation that travelling is inextricably linked with haunting; for her, travelling means being haunted by the enigmatic presence of the uncanny *topos* that cannot be captured in words, as its ontological significance cannot be predestined and predetermined, as if it were outside and beyond history. Struck with awe before her very own task of explicating and narrating the land of the Other, the traveller is haunted by the failure of her very own words to interpret the 'strange'. In this sense, travel writing is a storytelling process that should bring to the surface the impossibility 'to separate layers of culture' for they 'interpenetrate' so that 'the earlier cult shines through that of the present, and through that earlier cult shines a cult more ancient still'.[62] The 'ominous right' of the storyteller/travel writer in this case is to 'bear witness'[63] to the weakness but also power of interpretation that relies on a betraying, albeit seductive and powerful, act of translation destined to reveal the distance both from the Other, as well as and, more tragically so, the Self. Like her heroine Cassandra who is wrenched from her homeland and thrust into the land of the enemy and yet is exceptional for she alone has the Apollonian gift of

60 Ibid., p. 198.
61 Ibid., p. 201.
62 Ibid., p. 207.
63 Ibid., p. 232.

prophecy, Wolf is both a deprived and distinguished traveller: deprived for she comes from a country where, as she says, 'you cannot take the dignity of eating for granted'[64] and distinguished because she has the limited right to travel outside the then enclosed space of East Germany. In view of this double position, she feels more than any carefree traveller the burden that words will place upon her as they did on Cassandra, who is framed by her own prophecies and condemned to die alone and in exile, despised by her own people and hated by the enemy. Wolf is profoundly aware of that burden as she comes from a world, which like Cassandra's Troy, is broken into pieces and torn apart by the Cold War.

In Storace's text, Greece as an 'ideal' is subsumed in this evolution of Greece from an ancient land into a modern nation-state and underlies her critique, at times subtle, at times sardonic, of the evils and paradoxes of contemporary Greece, its everyday reality and popular culture. In other words, Greece as an 'ideal', the prism from which the Philhellenes of the nineteenth century envisioned and registered Greece, appears to be functioning as a measure for Storace's ironic detachment and critique of contemporary Greece. The realistic description and depiction of Greece in the nineties is often presented as the overwhelming culmination of the Greek past from its time of myths and its classical tradition to its transformation into a modern nation-state. This critique invites Storace as the only rational voice responding to the neurosis of the Greek society too blinded by its own pride in its past to overcome its present flaws. The author thus retrieves the 'ideal' as she draws on the rich past of myths, the archaeological sites and the landscape, to juxtapose it with the misreading or misuse of that past by contemporary Greece. Contemporary Greek reality is then represented as a foil to that once glorious past, glimpses of which the author witnesses in her travels and readings of myths. Storace is haunted by that 'ideal' that becomes for her the distorting glass through which she sees Greece in the present forgetting to contemplate her own position and reading of that present in her narrative thus belying her own insight: 'all travel books are as much retracings as they are journeys forward, explorations of the country left behind, which may be just as unknown as the territory ahead'.[65] Storace, however, does not regress to such 'retracings' as her narrative proceeds. Without exposing what is 'left behind', she slowly becomes an authoritative 'eye' and an omnipresent narrative 'I' that screens and measures the 'Other' from a seemingly detached and objective position that does not allow for a critical and profound self-introspection that would reveal the ways the narrative 'I' is informed by what is 'left behind', which in this case would be

[64] Ibid., p. 161.
[65] Storace, p. 19.

not only the American identity of the author but also her expectations of Greece as these were formulated through her education on its past, history, myths, and all the composing elements of the discourse of Greece as an 'ideal'. In other words, the author never exposes herself but rather hides behind the evaluations of her Greek personae, the 'real' people that she meets in her travels, when her readings of contemporary Greece become most harsh and critical.

In Wolf, this 'ideal' is not retrieved but questioned as part of the complex and complicating everyday reality of both the traveller and the *topos* that she narrates. Travel writing, writing about Greece and its spectres becomes like reading myth, that is, a 'special kind of adventure', '[a]n art that presupposes a gradual, peculiar transformation; a readiness to give oneself to the seemingly frivolous nexus of fantastic facts, of traditions, desires, and hopes, experiences and techniques of magic adapted to the needs of a particular group – in short, to another sense of the concept "reality"'.[66] Like another Odysseus, who returns home but is unable to recognise his land as *his* anymore, Wolf ends her travel reports and her *peripeteia* of seeking the spectres of Greece and Cassandra with the full knowledge that the most familiar and long-awaited homecoming, the *nostos*, is still alien, and that the travelled *topos* may not hand over its meaning to her but instead become more distant and foreign than before its exploration. This knowledge that constitutes Wolf's refusal to represent her travels in Greece as the narrative retrieval of an 'archaic imago', which can put under erasure and forsake the complexity of the present and presence both of the traveller and the travelled land, opens her narrative to the story of the experience of 'self-estrangement', the story of the traveller who 'dwells' in the travel of myths and lands whose recalcitrant and resisting silence is not reduced to a comfortable truth but is invoked to haunt the present.

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[66] Wolf, p. 196.

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